

ISLAM

AND

SERVICE TO MANKIND

Maulana Sayyid Jalaluddin Umari

Translated by
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Introduction to The First Edition

Author: *Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari*

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[Here is a comprehensive review by MAHMOOD AHMAD GHAZI, a renowned scholar of the Indian subcontinent, Former Pro Vice Chancellor, Islamic University, Islamabad, Former minister, Govt. of Pakistan, on Islamic concept of service to humanity, a subject of popular interest, published in the April-June 2002 issue of The Muslim World Book Review, Leicester, UK. This is included here on account of its concise, aesthetic and objective analysis of the book of a befitting introduction.]

The concept and practice of social service in Islam has been a subject of popular interest ever since the emergence of the ideas of social welfare and the welfare state in the West. The rise of socialist and communist philosophies at the beginning of the twentieth century and the resultant blitzkrieg of propaganda in the name of social justice, rights of the poor and the role of labourers gave further impetus to such writings. By the end of the first quarter of the last century, Muslim scholars also came forward and started writing on the subject. The poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal was among the first thinkers in the Muslim East who formulated the Muslim response to this question and addressed himself to this

important challenge. His historic writings proved to be trendsetters and others followed suit.

Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari, a well-known scholar from contemporary Muslim India, took it upon himself to produce a concise but comprehensive book on this subject. He had earlier published a series of articles on this subject in the Urdu quarterly *Tahqiqat-i-Islami* and monthly *Zindagi-i-Nau*, the academic voice of Jama'at-i-Islami of India. These articles were later compiled and edited in the form of a book in Urdu, which is now available in the present English translation.

The book consists of an Introduction and 12 brief chapters or sections. The Introduction summarises the social philosophy of Islam with particular reference to the role played by Islam in reforming human society. The learned author establishes the fundamental principle that service to humanity is a natural urge, which has ennobled human beings. No sane human being deviates from this natural and noble urge. According to the author, it is only sincerity and godliness that strengthens the sense of service and only godly persons serve humanity more sincerely. Sincerity and godliness emanate from the heart, which plays a pivotal role in rendering service to others. In this context, the author reminds his readers that power, wealth, authority and other worldly resources have been given to human beings not to subjugate others but to serve them better. He concludes the Introduction by saying that service should be free from all elements of compulsion and bondage and that it should always be considered a matter of honour.

On the basis of the theoretical foundations laid down

by him in the Introduction, the author has arranged his ideas and findings in a logical order dividing the subject matter into 12 chapters. Chapter One deals with the teachings of Islam in the field of social service. Passages have been quoted from the Qur'an to show that all earlier Prophets and Messengers advocated service to humanity and that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was no exception. The teachings of the Qur'an on the subject of social service are summarised in this chapter in a lucid style. The author concludes this discussion by reminding his readers that every act of service and help to mankind is considered an act of worship in Islam.

The relationship between service and worship is the subject of the second chapter in which the author refers to the role of Zakat, various kinds of ransoms, expiations, atonements and charities in advancing the cause of social service. The extensive nature of service is dealt with Chapter Three, entitled 'Service for All'. In this brief chapter, the author refers to the concept of *Ummah* or the universal Muslim brotherhood which expands the frontiers of Islamic social service to practically every nook and corner of the globe. It ensures that differences of colour, race, language and domicile do not create any hurdle in the way of providing service for the members of the human family. In this context, the author deems it necessary to remind readers that the concept of *Ummah* has nothing to do with the nationalistic feeling of contemporary political discourse. Unlike the present un-Islamic concept inherent in nationalistic philosophies, Islam promotes a real humanistic feeling and prepares its adherents to be tolerant and sympathetic to the members of other nations without any ill-will or prejudic.

The people who deserve our services the most are discussed in the fourth chapter. The author makes it clear at the outset that Islam requires that anybody who needs help must be helped. However, there are people who deserve our help and assistance more than others on account of our in-born attachment to them. Such persons include parents, spouses, children and other kith and kin. In addition to such personal considerations, there are people who deserve to be helped, such as the orphan, the indigent, the neighbour, the wayfarer, slaves and the subjugated. Islam not only exhorts believers to extend all possible help to them at moments of need, but also provides a mechanism for this help in its own system. *Zakat* and other compulsory charities and expiations are examples of this mechanism.

Various ways of providing help and service for people are discussed in Chapter Five. Here, the author has enlarged the scope of social service to such an extent that virtually every human activity falls under this umbrella. All material help one person extends to another is placed by the author under the category of social service. In addition, sharing of one's wealth and even humane treatment are considered forms of social service, something which tends to dilute the significance of social service as a distinct act of charity.* Other ways of service as mentioned by the author include helping the handicapped, guiding the blind, removing obstacles from the road, giving a glass of water to a thirsty person and

* The original book in Urdu entitled "Islam Mein Khidmat-e-Khalq Ka Tasawwur" is not a book on social service. It is rather on Islamic concepts of service to humanity which include sharing of one's wealth and humane treatment. (Author)

even smiling. Extensive passages are quoted from *Ahadith* to show the importance given to these services by the Prophet of Islam.

Chapter six throws light on the importance of providing occasional help for a person during their hour of need. Feeding the hungry and helping to feed the poor occupy an important place in the teachings of Islam. Of the very many references in the Qur'an and *Hadith*, the author has selected such quotations from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet as may be considered the most representative ones. Occasional help also includes the assistance rendered to the thirsty, to a person suffering from inclement weather, visiting a sick person to provide him or her with company and consolation. However, the author acknowledges that occasional help is no solution. Rather, a permanent solution to problems requires measures with lasting results. Chapter six deals with permanent solutions with a wider concept of help. The author has rightly pointed out that it is good to drop a few coins into the bowl of the beggar but what is of vital importance is that human needs are met on a permanent basis. The author gives details of what Islam asks its followers to do about solving the problems of the poor and the needy on a permanent basis. This includes feeding the hungry through *zakaat*, compulsory charity, expiations and other such institutions.

The need to have permanent solutions to the problems faced by the common man is discussed in Chapter Seven. No doubt, it is an act of piety to feed an indigent person or to provide clothing for the poor but this only solves his immediate problem. The author again deals with this question in the perspective of wider concept of help. He

examines in this respect the maintenance of orphans, helping people in finding permanent employment and rendering assistance to them to develop their own independent crafts and industries. Helping the poor in definite ways requires specific references to forms of service and help. These forms include financial help through grants, loans, gifts, partnerships in business or other economic enterprises by providing the finances or labour, expertise or consultancy. While elaborating upon these forms, the author gives detailed references from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet.

Welfare services constitute an important part of social service. The author deals with this aspect in Chapter Nine. In this context, Islamic teachings about sanitation and cleanliness, the provision of rest houses and boarding facilities for travellers and wayfarers, the provision of water, particularly in dry and desert areas, the reclamation of fallow land, the planting of trees, the construction of such public facilities as mosques, schools, and hospitals are all cited in detail. The creation of public welfare facilities and endowments to finance public service projects is an important hallmark of Muslim culture. The institution of *waqf* is one of the significant contributions of the Islamic civilisation. Without highlighting the historical significance of this institution, however, the author makes reference to Ahadith about public endowments and shows how Islam induces its followers to give away their wealth and property for public service. In the context of his discussion on endowments, the author makes reference to the Islamic concept of public ownership of such natural resources in whose development human efforts have

played no role. Such property belongs to all. Likewise, national resources are to be considered national property to be used for the common benefit of all.

In Chapter Ten the author emphasises that social work should be done in an organised way. He highlights the Islamic emphasis on organisation and discipline and refers to the advantages of organised efforts. In this context he underlines the importance of cooperation for social work, not only between Muslims but non-Muslims too.

In the context of social work, Islam has corrected certain wrong concepts and reformed some wrong habits and practices. These are dealt with in Chapter Eleven under the heading 'Reformation of Wrong Concepts'. Here, the author tries to establish the relationship between various kinds of duties and places them in an appropriate order. According to Islam, the nearest of our kith and kin take precedence over others in their entitlement to charity, provided indigents are not neglected.

The last chapter of the book deals with the key, rather the spirit, of social service in Islam, namely, sincerity. In this chapter the author tries to bring home to his readers that it is the sincerity and purity of intention, which assign high spiritual status to an act of social service.

The book is a welcome addition to the popular literature on Islam. It would be better to bring the book up to international standard.



Foreword

Social service is one of the issues that Islam chose to focus upon and deal with in depth. Islam highlighted the importance of service, used persuasion to promote it, and not only adumbrated its concept but also specified who should be served and who deserve decent treatment. Though Islam stressed that all Muslims constitute one 'Ummah' and as such had the social responsibility of mutually sharing the hardships, it reminded them at the same time that their higher duty envisaged the welfare of the whole human race and consequently it emphasized prejudice against any individual was not in sync with this higher duty and so possible service to any individual in times of need was in the fitness of things. To facilitate universal participation in service, all types of service, big or small, have been given due recognition. In addition, Islam has given prominence to the social welfare schemes and has included both the individual and the society in this campaign. If the sense of service is perverted, serious angularities result. Islam has rounded them off, removed misconceptions about service, identified its rightful place in the scheme of priorities it has formulated, aroused the passion for selfless service and awakened the spirit of genuine sincerity.

All these aspects have been addressed in the light of the Qur'an and Hadith. An endeavour has been made to encompass the Qur'anic verses and Traditions relevant to the theme (as largely as possible) and to make their

importance as unambiguous as possible in their proper context. As a by-product, those aspects of social service which have assumed importance in modern age have also been given due recognition. In the entire discussion, jurisprudence, the Prophet's biography, and the linguistic sources have been consulted where it was deemed necessary.

A booklet of mine with the title, 'Service to Mankind' was published in India in 1978 and later in Pakistan. A standard book on such a significant subject was not available in Urdu. This lacuna, I hope, will no longer be there to some extent after the publication of this book. My submission is that Allah should be gracious enough to accept this humble effort and this book should bring maximum benefit to those who read it.

Jalaluddin Umari

(February 4, 1990)

A Note on the Third Edition (Urdu)

The Institute of Islamic Research and Compilation, Aligarh, had published two editions of this book. I have revisited this book with a view to increasing its appeal further. An introduction to the book has been added at the beginning. Markazi Maktaba-e-Islami, New Delhi, is presenting this book in a tidy and attractive form.

The English version of this book, "The Concept of Social Service in Islam," was (first rendered by Prof V. Rahmathullah) published by Jamia Darus Salam, Oomerabad, Tamil Nadu in collaboration with Islamic Foundation Trust, Perambur, Chennai. Madhur Sandesh Sangam, New Delhi- 25, published its Hindi version with the title 'Jan Seva and Islam'. Malayalam and Tamil versions have been in circulation for a long time now.

It is learnt that after reading the Tamil version a reputed scholar commented, "I have read many books about Islam but this book makes it abundantly clear that Islam brings nothing but total goodness for the human race and has taken comprehensive and effective steps for humanity's welfare".

Idara-e-Maarif, Karachi, Pakistan has published this book too. May Allah through His special grace approve of these endeavours, enlarge beyond expectations their area of utility, and include all those who cooperated in this venture in the grant of divine recompense.

Translator's Note

The English version of the first edition of this book appeared under the title, "Concept of Social Service in Islam", and the credit for it goes to Prof. Rahmathullah Sahib of Islamiyah College, Vaniyambadi. A review of the English version by no less a person than Mohmood Ahmed Ghazi Sahib appeared in Islamic Book Review, Leicester, U.K. In view of the intellectual excellence of the review, it is included in this edition.

The author, Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari, has endeavoured to make the book more authentic by making several additions in its third edition. There was some difficulty in changing the first English version to bring it in line with the updated Urdu edition, and so I made hold to translate the whole work anew. The title of the book has also been changed to "Islam and Service to Mankind" in keeping with the revision of the materials and discourses contained therein.

May Allah accept these efforts and may He be gracious enough to grant both the author and the translator the privilege of rendering further service to Islam.

Usman Muhammad Iqbal

Chapter 1

Introducing the Book

(Note: The Hindi version of this book "Jana Seva and Islam" was released at Markaz, Jamaat-e-Islami, Hind, New Delhi on 28 November, 1999. On that occasion, the author presented a brief report on the book and its discourses. The report after revision is being presented hereunder.)

Islam lays utmost emphasis on beliefs and the observance of various methods of obeisance to God. If the doctrinal base is correct, and if the relationship with God has been strengthened through the various forms of submission to God, the cognitive and the psycho-motor activities will naturally be impeccable and life will run its course on the rectilinear way of steadfastness. Islam puts emphasis next on ethics and law, extols the virtues of good social behaviour, and has made sublimity of character mandatory for human greatness. Islam makes wicked behaviour despicable and insists upon abjuring it. There is no gainsaying the fact that the low ethical standards deprive man of love from God and man. When one is on a high moral ground, one can become their favourite. A prominent aspect of high moral calibre is its emphasis on rendering service to all living creatures. Service to all is to share hardships and sorrows with others. The altruistic temperament urges man to monitor the human situation, and to ameliorate it.

From its inception Islam raised its voice against oppression and tyranny, expounded the rights of the

vulnerable individuals and groups and instructed the society not to violate these rights and to foster a rights-friendly ambience. Islam sanctioned a comprehensive and durable legal system to uphold these rights and made it obligatory for the state to enforce them.

As soon as the themes of social service and human welfare come up for discussion, one cannot help thinking of the Christian missionaries even though Islam has proposed a far higher concept of these themes and has got the individual, the society and the state involved in their implementation. It is difficult to find a parallel to the details and the aspects of social service and human welfare which Islam has addressed and highlighted. This book endeavours to present them.

The aspects of social service which this book elucidates in the light of Islamic teachings are as follows:

1. It is human nature to serve. Parents and relatives feel impelled to serve an innocent babe. This impulse is strengthened by the relationship with God.

- 2. In every epoch, the Prophets and the scriptures have given instruction with regard to social service. Finally, the Qur'an and the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) have drawn special attention to, and given strict instruction about social service, have aroused sympathy for others and have shown it to be a very great method of securing God's approbation.

3. In the eyes of Islam, social service is an act of worship. The Holy Qur'an mentions Prayer and Zakath simultaneously. Prayer establishes direct contact with God and Zakath is one way of serving the people. Islam thus brings out the significance of both. Another object

of this is that on certain occasions service through money can replicate service through human body. In certain circumstances, charity can be a substitute for fasting. Alms and financial assistance fetch direct profit to people.

4. Islam orders service not only to co-religionists but also to other human beings.

5. While instructing the followers to serve, Islam points out who deserve our sympathy and help from among the individuals and classes of people. Parents and relatives are of course among them as we have blood ties with them. Among those who are not so related and yet deserve help are orphans, people who are left destitute, neighbours, wayfarers, slaves and the subaltern.

6. Many a need of man is fulfilled through currency notes and wealth. So there is a special significance attached to service through money, even though this is not the only way to serve. According to Hadith, receiving a brother with a smile, a sweet utterance, giving someone a leg up, to lift a bag and give it to its owner, to remove a thorn, a stone or some such painful object from the way, showing the way to someone who has lost the way, to fill someone's pot with water, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong are some of the other ways of serving people. The main proposition is that every good deed is "sadaqah".

7. Service can be a brief and short-lived activity like feeding the hungry, quenching the thirst, providing things like cereals, salt, fuel and utensils for cooking, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and supplying medicines. In certain circumstances such service assumes great

significance. Disregard towards it bespeaks insensitivity and moral depravity. Islam has specially laboured this point and enjoined upon everyone to do his duty in this matter.

8. In addition, Islam has laid emphasis upon durable solution to the challenges faced by mankind. A timely help given to a person who is left destitute and a widow fetches merit but the endeavour to eliminate their need and worry on a permanent basis is equal to worshipping God without a pause. It is a meritorious deed to pass one's hand on an orphan's head gently and lovingly, as it softens the heart but offering financial help, educational assistance and moral training to the orphan may fetch the company of Allah's Messenger (blessings and peace be with him) in paradise. Islam insists that the needy and the have-nots must be helped in starting an enterprise or cooperation must be offered to them in industries and factories.

9. Aspects of service are many: financial cooperation, lending a loan, respite given in the repayment of loan, giving a gift, lending items for use free of cost, offering two identical items in times of need like a pair of bullocks for ploughing, or two cows or buffaloes for milk, offering partnership instead of hiring for employment, offering shares in agricultural produce, rendering legal, moral and economic help to a victim. These aspects have been specifically mentioned in Hadith; on their basis other aspects can be envisaged.

10. The area of welfare schemes can be very large. These schemes may yield profit on a vast scale. The individuals, the institutions and the state carry out these

schemes like garbage clearance, construction of roads, making arterial roads safe and fit for vehicular traffic, supply of potable water, planting of saplings and afforestation, making the earth habitable and exploitable, construction of schools and places of worship, ensuring health care, etc. Islam did not merely draw attention to these schemes but encouraged its followers to permanently donate property or sources of income and devised rules and regulations for it.

11. Islam encourages the establishment of the institutions and societies for social service and permits cooperation with the followers of other religions in this regard.

12. A major contribution of Islam is that it has rectified misconceptions about and wrong approaches to social service. It says that there is a natural sequential arrangement of the rights of one man over another. This sequence has to be adhered to. The rights of parents, spouse, progeny and relatives take precedence over the rights of others. It is not proper to pay attention to the needs and rights of others overlooking the rights of one's closest relatives in one's enthusiasm for social service. Similarly, it is not right to ignore deserving cases in the society on account of one's attachment to family.

13. In certain religious groupings there is a permanent class divide. In certain others, begging is given the status of a profession. Islam is thoroughly against such practices. In its view there should not be a permanent gulf between the rich and the poor. It is gross injustice to make one class of people lead a hand-to-mouth existence on a permanent basis, and carry a bowl

of charity and to make another class philanthropic. In certain peculiar circumstances, man may be obliged to seek financial assistance but he will have to strain every nerve to come out of such a stranglehold at the earliest.

14. Certain religions identify themselves wholly with social service or regard it as their *raison d'être*. It is said about a few religious luminaries that service was their very religion. Such an attitude requires revision. Notwithstanding the over-riding importance of social service, Islam regards it as a part of faith and not the whole of faith.

15. Last but not the least, in the eyes of Islam that deed alone is acceptable if it is performed with a sincere motive and dedicated to God. If the deed is showcased for publicity and for impressing the people, Islam rejects it and reserves it for reprehension. Social service is of such high importance as to demand an equally matching purity of motive and dedication to God. Though it is difficult to maintain the purity of motive in social service, without it divine recompense is unthinkable.

A greater elucidation awaits you in the following pages.

Chapter 2

Urge to Serve and the Role of Islam

Service is a natural urge:

Man is the noblest of God's creation. It is his service that is discussed here. The birth of a child is a matter of celebration. Joy knows no bounds. Friends from far and near offer their compliments. Parents and close relatives commence to serve the child, each in his own way. Care is taken to minister to its needs of hunger and thirst as it is speechless and helpless, and to identify its pain and to remove it. When need arises, health care is offered promptly and to the maximum extent possible. No inhibition is felt in keeping the child clean and properly washed. When the child grows up a little, its sportiveness, mischief, and noisy behaviour are indulgently tolerated. When the child reaches the school-going age, parents begin to worry about its education and future prospects. They endeavour to ensure that along with increase in years, its needs are well looked after, its growth must be on the right lines, it should have full prosperity and success in the years to come. If there is any deficiency in this endeavour, those who are fond of the child feel sorry for it. If the child belongs to a rich person, a bureaucrat, a capitalist or a landowner, the quality of service will match the status of the parent. Its needs and demands are met meticulously. If the child suffers a little, its parents, relatives and a whole team of servants would become active and the best possible effort would be made to bring comfort and relief to the child.

Why are such efforts made? It is because they look upon the child as their own, as someone dear to them, as a member of their family. They deem it their duty to provide help in the child's growth, education, training and development. This feeling of affinity emerges naturally from within. This is a part of the divine scheme to ensure the perpetuity of the human species. The world has always commended this noble feeling. If this feeling weakens, it will seriously endanger the human species. If this feeling ceases to exist by some misfortune, the world will be deprived of its flowering season and will wear the look of a garden laid waste by winter.

The unspoilt nature of the child

The emotional affinity with the child is largely due to its indigenous innocence. Its bosom is free from those despicable impulses which drive a wedge between persons and trigger enmity, hostility and anarchy. It has no claim over anything, no complaint against or dispute with anyone or malice towards anyone. It owns nothing which it can distribute. Of course, it can and does distribute love, it can and does bring smiles to others' lips. Then why shouldn't one love the child, and why should one have ill-feeling towards it?

Deviation from the unspoilt nature commences

Time moves at its own pace. The child keeps pace too with day and night, with month and year and grows and develops, reaches maturity and becomes aware of one's own identity and individuality. An era of independent thinking and freedom begins. There is no conformity to

anybody's thoughts. Difference with one's own relatives is along expected lines. No interference with one's own feelings is tolerated. Personal wishes are dear to one and carry him along. One becomes intensely aware of one's rights so much so that one is by no means prepared to give them up. Self-interest dictates terms and little by little avarice takes hold of one. To extinguish the fire of avarice one makes no bones about adopting wrong approaches and improper methods. Sincerity parts company with him. His activities are no longer unselfish and noble. Self-interest regulates his interpersonal contacts and dealings, and determines the contours of friendship and enmity. Others look upon him as a slave of self-interest and as their own competitor and rival.

In this way the ambience of affection, sympathy, service and sacrifice undergoes a gradual change. Sometimes there is a thorough upheaval of emotions. Disputes arise between siblings and between parents on the one hand and the progeny on the other. Friendship gives way to enmity; renunciation, to revenge; and service, to sadism. The child that once showered flowers of love begins to ignite flames of hatred. The elders that once hugged the child feel after its transformation that its proximity is repulsive.

The Corrective role of Islam

Religions of the world proposed to ensure that man should continue to enjoy throughout his life the same love that he receives in his infancy and the clash of interests should not terminate it. They wished to ensure service for him when he is in a state of weakness and to

support him when he is helpless, and they expect him to serve others when he is strong and to become a support for others when he assumes power. Islam has played a unique role in this regard, and it is briefly explained here.

Relationship with God boosts the desire to serve.

No doubt, the desire to serve is inborn but it is overwhelmed by personal aggrandisement, group interests, and selfish desires. Man does not hesitate to behave wickedly with other human beings and even becomes beastly and barbaric. Islam says that the sincere adoration of God is a means to overcome base and cruel tendencies because service to mankind is a part of the act of adoring God. The heart that brims with love for God cannot be without love for His creatures. The stronger the relationship with God, the stronger the relationship with men. While discussing human rights, service to humanity and good manners, the Qur'an invariably mentions the subjects of adoring God, piety, and Prayers. This is to highlight the fact that the adoration of and the relationship with God are a means to recognise the rights of and service to humanity. When this relationship weakens, it results in disregard of human rights. He who forgets God's favours to him day and night can but easily forget the favours received from other human beings. It is not surprising if he becomes oblivious of others' rights over him.

Devotees of God offer sincere service

The historic lesson that the Qur'an presents is that the true devotees of God filled with piety treat other human

beings with sympathy and goodwill, do not deny the rights to others, and do not commit excesses over others, and they shun cruelty and injustice. They serve humanity without an axe to grind and without external coercion. They have no desire for worldly gain, do not seek reputation and power and authority through service. They render service with a sense of duty, seeking approval and recompense from God only. Even their detractors are obliged to testify to their nobility, decency, character, sympathy and goodwill. Whenever a man ceased to fear God, his conduct towards others became deplorable, and he became unjust and aggressive, and denied rights to others. In short, he committed every possible excess.⁽¹⁾

Purity of motive is essential for service

Human bosom should be a home to pure feelings in order to serve. Man can render service truly only if he is in possession of sympathy, kindness, sacrifice, forbearance, patience, sincerity and selflessness and has overcome greed, avarice, ill will, jealousy, wickedness, aggressiveness and deception. Otherwise service cannot

(1) It is sometimes maintained, that without God and religion, social service can be rendered, and in proof thereof, the massive service that the West has rendered throughout the world is cited. What the West has done is but an illustration of our contention that the desire to serve is an inborn human urge. However, this urge becomes weak when it comes into conflict with personal aggrandisement or national interest and man's behaviour undergoes a sea-change. The same Western countries, reputed for their service to mankind, adopt economic blockade of, put political pressure on and use every possible strategy against hostile countries to ruin them while pursuing protectionist policies. Devotion to God eliminates from individuals and nations such inhuman behaviour and does not allow selfish or national interests to overpower the inborn desire to serve mankind.

be rendered in the way it ought to be rendered and even if one manages to serve, the service will leave much to be desired. Islam inculcates lofty moral principles in man and protects him from becoming amoral. For this purpose, preaching, exhortation, persuasion, and warning are all used. To supplement them further, legal force is put to use.

The aim of political authority is to serve

Strength, wealth, status, political power - all these are given to a man not to enslave others and not to display one's pomp and splendour. All aspects and resources are to be used in the service of man with a sense of accountability, and with the awareness of human rights. The vaster the resources, the greater the accountability. This is borne out in the following Qur'anic verse:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ
بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ
الْعِقَابِ ذَلِكُمْ وَأَنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ
(الأنعام: ١٦٥)

"It is He who has made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth! He has raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He has given you: for your Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (6:165)

Service ought to be voluntary

People serve and are made to serve. When they are made to serve, coercion, oppression, exploitation, denial of rights, insensitivity to human feelings, loss of human dignity wreak havoc. If this state of affairs continues, it

will come perilously close to slavery. Islam is much against all forms of exploitation and is determined to eradicate them.

Service can be a dignified affair

If service is motivated by sincerity and love and is free from vulgar intentions, one who serves secures a dignified status. Others look upon him with attachment and reverence. His greatness is recognised in every quarter and he captivates human hearts. It is said and rightly so: "He who serves gets served in turn."

Who can envision the scale of reward that sincere service is destined to get in the Hereafter? It is difficult to conceive here in this caged world how massive and limitless the reward will be!

Chapter 3

Islam and Service to God's Creation

Ethics addresses the theme of service and good treatment towards human beings. Every school of moral principles has given space to this theme. All religions have recognised its importance as a cursory glance at the scriptures will bear it out.

Social Service in the Prophetic Teachings

The Qur'an has several references to the teachings of the Prophets who lived before Prophet Muhammed (Allah's blessings and peace be with him). Prophet Abraham and Israeli Prophets who were his descendants are cited in greater detail. From this detail one learns how they made the observance of human rights, the duty of service, and ideal behaviour obligatory upon their followers in the form of a covenant.

وَ إِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ وَ
بِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَ
قُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا ۚ وَ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَ آتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ ثُمَّ
تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَ أَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝ وَ إِذْ أَخَذْنَا
مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ
دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَ أَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ۝ (البقرة: ٨٣، ٨٤)

"And remember We took a covenant from the children of Israel (to this effect): Worship none but Allah; treat

with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practise regular charity. Then did you turn back, except a few among you, and you backslide (even now).

And remember We took your covenant (to this effect): Shed no blood amongst you, not turn out your own people from your homes, and this you solemnly ratified, and to this you can bear witness." (2:83, 84)

Explicit in these verses are the precepts that the children of Israel took an oath to worship one God and to treat others well. Another pledge was to abstain from torture and cruelty. Good conduct and cruelty are poles apart. The lofty urge to serve cannot pair with ruthlessness and wickedness. He who sheds blood cannot apply balm to the wounds. The hand that serves cannot allow itself to be raised for committing cruel acts. These are two different things and are born with two opposite trends. The survival of nations is linked to service. Oppression has only broken the spine of rebellious and domineering nations and most of them have never reared their ugly heads again. The Qur'an complains that the children of Israel did not value this life-giving covenant and violated it regularly. They followed the scripture selectively, killed many people of their own race and turned many others out of their houses. They entered into a conspiracy with their own enemies to carry out those nefarious designs. Ultimately their solidarity was broken to pieces and they had to eat the humble pie in this world and they will have no pie in the sky. (2:85)

Qur'an and Social Service

The Qur'an has preserved in its pages the digest of the teachings of the Israeli Prophets. From the beginning of its revelation, the Qur'an first stressed the basic doctrines and then emphasized two principles. One, man should strengthen his relationship with God by worshipping Him and none else besides. Two, man should behave well with others, give others their rights, be submissive towards parents, fulfil the needs of relatives, neighbours, orphans, indigent people to the maximum extent possible, serve as much as possible the person who deserves his service. If he is strong, he should not misuse his strength against the weak; instead, he should be their support and pillar of strength, protect the life, property and labour of others as though as they were his own; should not practise deception and should be steadfast in justice and trustworthiness. His existence should not be harmful but profitable to others. Others should benefit by him and should not suffer at his hands. The Qur'an has repeatedly driven home these points, sometimes briefly and sometimes elaborately. Chapter 17, verses 23-38, and even 6:151,152 may be consulted. Allah has ordained that God alone should be worshipped, parents should be treated well, particularly in their old age, and all courtesy should be extended to them and no harshness should be shown to them and God's blessings should be invoked for them. Take care of the relatives, the needy and the wayfarers, and if you are not in a position to do so, excuse yourself gently. Do not resort to infanticide under the impression that you do not have the means to feed them. Allah will feed you and your children. To kill one's own children is an abomination. Do not go near adultery

because it is obscene and evil. Human life is sacred and snuffing it out without a legal justification is despicable. Do not usurp the orphan's assets. When the orphan reaches the age of maturity, his assets should be restored to him, pay heed to pledges and you are answerable to God otherwise. Weights and measures should be used properly. Don't discuss things unknown to you. Use the ears, the eyes, and the mind in a responsible manner. Strutting proudly is reprehensible you cannot split the earth with your kick; you cannot stretch your figure to the height of a mountain. What God disapproves of is made clear.⁽²⁾

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith have drawn attention to and laid emphasis on not one but several aspects of social service. Here is an attempt to elucidate some of them.

Acknowledgment of God's blessings:

Some are in possession of every imaginable facilities and comforts and some are devoid of them. The exalted Qur'an demands that the first group should provide succour to the second group, and make life easy and pleasant to live for them. The man equipped with eyes to see, ears to hear, a tongue to speak, strong limbs for physical exertion, head and heart for cognitive skills, and luxuries for easy-going life is obliged to lend support to a person who is physically handicapped or deprived of resources for survival and is incapable of participating in life's endeavours, in order that the possibility of his

(2) Vide 17:23-38. The gist of these contents is available in 6:151, 152. The Qur'an has stressed each one of these topics in several places. Examples are available in the pages of this book.

begging or committing suicide is eliminated. A well equipped man is obliged to provide resources for comfortable living to the one who is without them, under the realization that whatever he has is a gift from God and he should remain indebted to God. One way of expressing indebtedness is to be courteous to people and to render service to those who stand in need of it. People have a legitimate share in every gift granted by God; without sharing with others one cannot be grateful to God. If one does not feel an urge to serve others after being blessed with divine favours, it implies that one has become insensitive and apathetic towards the gifts in one's possession. The Qur'an reprimands this apathy and warns of its grave consequences. For example,

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ ۚ وَلِسَانًا ۚ وَشَفَتَيْنِ ۚ وَ هَدَيْنَاهُ
النَّجْدَيْنِ ۚ فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ ۚ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ۚ
فَكُرْسِيَةٌ ۚ أَوْ إِطْعَامٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ ۚ يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ ۚ
أَوْ مِسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ ۚ ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ تَوَاصَوْا
بِالصَّبْرِ وَ تَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ ۚ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۚ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَاتُوا بِآثِنًا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ ۚ عَلَيْهِمُ نَارٌ
مُوقَدَةٌ ۚ

(البلد: ٨-٢٠)

"Have We not made for him a pair of eyes, and a tongue, and a pair of lips, and shown him the two highways? But he has made no haste on the path that is steep. And what will explain to you the path that is steep? (It is:) freeing the bondman; or the giving of food in a day of privation to the orphan with claims of relationship, or to the indigent (down) in the dust. Then will he be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy, and self-restraint), and enjoin

deeds of kindness and compassion. Such are the Companions of Right Hand. But those who reject our signs, they are the (unhappy) Companions of the Left Hand. On these will be Fire vaulted over (all around)."
(90:8-20)

Of the innumerable favours that God bestowed on mankind, a few easily recognizable are mentioned in these verses. Eyes, ears, heart and mind with their unique potentials have been given to man to enable him to climb up a steep path - a metaphor for the emancipation of the slaves and the service to orphans and have-nots, in concert with the people of faith who have dedicated themselves to such a mission and are seeking the cooperation of others in this task. Their conduct is characterised by affection and sympathy for the victims, the subalterns, the hungry and the thirsty and by the persuasion of others to uphold the same sympathy. This is the way to Heaven. The opponents of this way are proceeding towards Hell which they will reach on the Day of Judgment and whose doors will be so shut as to permanently block their exit.

Service to people is Service to God:

Islam identifies service to people as service to God, helping people as helping God, working for them is working for God. If someone stretches a begging bowl before you, and you return it empty, then it is as though you have not obliged God. If you deny help to a patient in need, it is looked upon as a denial of help to God. The sine qua non of pleasing God is the act of pleasing people and procuring rest for them. He who is in the heavens shows mercy only when the people on earth are shown

mercy. The details of this concept are most effectively and pointedly laid bare in a Hadith.

The exalted Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said, "On the Day of Judgment, Allah will address a man: O son of Adam! I was ill and you did not visit my sick bed. Perplexed, he would reply, "O Lord of mine! You are Lord of heaven and earth, when did you fall ill and how could I ask after your health?" Allah would inform him, "you knew that Mr. X, a slave of mine, was ill and yet you did not call on him and inquired about his health. If you had done so, you would have found Me near him."

Again, Allah will address a man, "O son of Adam! I asked for food from you and you did not feed Me." The man would seek information, "O Lord of heaven and earth! When were you hungry and how could I have fed you?" Allah will reply, "You remember Mr. Y, a slave of mine, asked for food from you but you did not oblige him. If you had fed him, you would have got a reward for it now."

Similarly, Allah would complain, "O son of Adam! I sought water to drink from you and you did not give me what I wanted." The addressee will reply, "O Lord of heaven and earth! When were you thirsty and how could I have quenched your thirst?" Allah would elucidate, "Mr. Z, a slave of mine, wanted water to drink and you refused to oblige him. If you had obliged him, you would have found its reward here and now."⁽³⁾

To appreciate the greatness and importance of social service it is more than enough to state that it is a service

(3) Muslim, "Kitabul birr wa silah, chapter on the Merits of calling on the Sick." (see also St. Matthew, 25:35-40- Translator)

rendered to God and that evasion of this service is tantamount to ignoring service to God.

Unrestricted urge to serve

Islam motivates its follower to live thus: He should be a perennial source of nothing but good. His physical, intellectual and material assets should be pressed into the service of mankind. He should give them moral and material help to the best of his capacity. He should not emerge from his house spreading mischief and anarchy. He should appear before people as one committed to their welfare and prosperity. His seat should be the centre radiating peace and security. His ambition should be to remove obstacles faced by others; he should constantly strive for the religious and spiritual reform.

The following hadith throws light on the ways and means of how Islam motivates a person to serve the society morally and materially. Hadrat Abu Sayeed Khudri (May Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) advised:

يَاكُمْ وَالْجُلُوسَ عَلَى الطَّرِيقَاتِ فَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا بِدَانِيَا هِيَ مَجَالِسُنَا
تَحْدُثُ فِيهَا، قَالَ فَاذَا آيْتُمْ إِلَى الْمَجَالِسِ فَأَعْطُوا الطَّرِيقَ حَقَّهَا
قَالُوا وَمَا حَقُّ الطَّرِيقِ قَالَ غَضُّ الْبَصَرِ وَكَفُّ الْأَذَى وَرَدُّ السَّلَامِ
وَأَمْرٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهْيٌ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

Avoid wayside gathering. The Companions explained that there was no other alternative for them as it was something of a club for them where they could converse. The Prophet then made a concession for them and said, 'if such a gathering is unavoidable then

observe its etiquette'. They sought details of the etiquette. The Prophet replied: Keep the eyes low, avoid hurtful comments, reply to greetings, (speak decently -an addition in Abu Talha's narration) promote social good, and eliminate undesirable things, (instruct the strangers how to find their way - an addition in Abu Huraira's narration) and in Abu Dawood the Prophet instructed that they should aid the one with a complaint and escort another without a sense of direction.

This Hadith indicates that a Muslim has to keep always in mind the responsibilities which devolve upon him on the way, in the marketplace and in public fora. He is the guardian of others' chastity; he cannot be permitted to look at others with lust. He is born to dispel others' woes; he should not be the cause for harming others. To block free flow of traffic, to spread pollution, to pick quarrels with the passers-by, to be abrasive - all these and other harmful activities should not taint him. He should respond promptly to the greeting of peace in order to reassure that he intends no harm. Wherever he is listened to, he should promote a healthy social outlook and prohibit evil. The society will thus witness a growth of virtuous living and will be safeguarded from the invasion of evil. If anyone intends to do evil, he should be seized with fear that he will have to reckon with an ombudsman. Nobody should indulge in abuse and heated exchange on a thoroughfare. Nobility and purity should be reflected in the way he addresses people. He should behave with others in a sweet manner and this will put an end to many a bickering and turmoil in the market-place. It is his responsibility to remove distress and to show the way to those who are not familiar with the topography of the place.

Islam uses both persuasion and strict instruction to tell an individual that he should certainly remove the pain and distress of another if he has the means to do so. If a person is hungry, and thirsty and needs clothes, then the needful should be done, He should provide shelter to the homeless, medical treatment to the patient, means of livelihood to the unemployed, cognitive skills to the unlettered, and security to the vulnerable. To reinforce this urge to serve, Islam has condemned oppression, highlighted its ugliness, and forcefully dissuaded the exploitation of a person's weakness, vulnerability, poverty and ignorance and persuaded the followers instead to do good to such a person and remove his defects. Islam disapproves of sadistic pleasure and approves of empathy, and expects that its followers will rescue men in distress and hardship. Islam fosters a social ambience wherein injustice is looked down upon and justice and magnanimity hold court.

Every endeavour to ameliorate the human predicament is viewed in Islam as a religious act. The following chapter expatiates upon this.

Chapter 4

Service is a religious duty.

The holy Qur'an (51:56) prescribes 'ibadah' - service to God - as the purpose of human existence. Ibadah is performed to secure proximity to and pleasure of God. It is offered through the medium of the human physique and nation's currency. The articulation of words and genuflections constitute physical act of worship and the financial act of worship is to offer money and materials to God through service, assistance and cooperation given to mankind. Relationship with God is tangible through the physical act of worship and not so tangible in the financial act of worship. To secure that tangibility it is necessary to offer financial assistance with the awareness that it is a religious duty and this awareness will intensify the feeling of proximity to God. This is the way to experience religious ecstasy while performing a duty of material and economic welfare.

According to Islam, social service is a religious duty and not merely a secular affair. To appreciate this attitude, one has to keep in mind the entire scope of service to God as Islam enunciates.

The Relationship between Salat and Zakat

Salat is the submission of the human body to God, Zakat is the surrender of material assets to God. Salat is an acknowledgment of God's glory and human subordination; Zakat is a demonstration that the human

heart, full of sympathy and sorrow for others, is capable of generous donation. The Qur'an makes it a point to mention both cheek by jowl and emphasize both equally and frequently. That the financial service to the poor is no less important than physical submission to God is thus made clear. Both are necessary to please God. It is not enough for a man to bow in utter devotion and dedication to God; it is equally imperative for him to acknowledge that the needy and others have a claim upon his hard-earned income.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ
خَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ
الْقِيَمَةِ ۝ (البينة: ٥)

"And they have been commended no more than this to worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular Prayer and to practise regular charity and that is the religion right and straight." (98:5)

This verse gives instruction for sincere and exclusive devotion to God and this devotion is explained as an act of observing Salat and Zakat. There can not be a service to God without these virtuous acts. A more comprehensive term than 'ibadah' is 'khair' and it is used in several verses.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ
وَفَعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ۝ (الحج: ٧٧)

"O ye who believe! Bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that you may prosper." (22:77)

Here, bowing and prostrating, that is, Prayer is first

ordered, then 'ibadah' and then 'khair' are ordered. Hadrat Abdullah, son of Abbas (Allah be pleased with both) explains that 'khair' stands for giving respect to relatives and for lofty morals.⁽⁵⁾ 'Ibadah' includes these noble deeds and yet these are mentioned as distinct qualities in order to draw special attention towards them. The same reason is at work in referring to Prayer separately even though there is no doubt that Prayer is 'ibadah' per se.

In the Qur'an, 'ibadah' is mentioned after referring to Salat, Zakat, and Khair in such a comprehensive way as to encompass them all. In one place, after mentioning Prophet Abraham and some of his successors, it is stated:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ
الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا
عَبِيدِينَ ۝ (الانباء: ٤٣)

"And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by our Command, and we sent them, inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular Prayers, and to practise charity, and they constantly served Us (and Us only)." (21:73)

What greater proof is required of the greatness and supremacy of all activities pertaining to social service

(5) After quoting this statement, Imam Razi says, "Khair can be enacted in two ways - offering reverence to the Lord and extending affection and courtesy to the people. The sequence of Prayer, 'ibadah' and khair goes on broadening the connotation of each of these three activities in an increasing order." (Tafseer -e- kabeer, vol xii, part xxiii, p.63) If 'ibadah' does not mean merely 'worship' and it refers to obedience to God's commandments throughout one's existence, then the area of its connotation is co-extensive with the semantic range of 'khair'. This extended meaning of 'ibadah' is quite accurate.

and human welfare that they ultimately are transformed into an act of service to God?

Condonation for not Fasting:

On occasions, 'ibadah' through the medium of money becomes a substitute for not offering service through one's physique, or a compensation for defective physical service.

Like the Prayer, fasting is a service to God through one's physical structure. Man remains hungry and thirsty and controls sexual urge just to please God. The initial order in this regard is:

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ
خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة: ١٨٣)

"For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent but he that will give more, of his own free will-it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew." (2:184)

This verse allows a person capable of fasting not to fast but in lieu thereof demands the feeding of at least one person and makes the feeding of more persons a voluntary act which will fetch greater merit. At the same time, the necessity of fasting is made crystal clear. This allowance was later withdrawn and fasting during the month of Ramadan was made obligatory on all, with the exception of the wayfarer and the patient who were expected to compensate later for the number of days they were not able to fast. (2 :185)

The Traditions tell us that those who are not able to

fast on account of their extreme old age or some serious illness are exempted from fasting but are obliged to condone for not fasting by giving a poor person two meals.⁽⁶⁾

Post -fasting charity

After a month - long fasting, one is expected to give cash or kind by way of charity known as Sadaqa-e-Fitr. The wisdom behind this act is spelt out in a hadith narrated by Hadrat Abdullah, son of Hadrat Abbas (May Allah be pleased with both).

فرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم زكوة الفطر
طهرة للصيام من اللغو والرفث و طعمة للمساكين

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace be with him) has made payment of Sadaqa-e-Fitr compulsory as it polishes up the dross of inane activities and unpleasant amorous talk tainting the act of fasting and it provides food for the poor.

During fasting, useless and unworthy errors and lapses occur by chance or inadvertently. This hadith explains that the little help that the poor get through Sadaqa-e-Fitr washes off the taint of those errors and fasting is rendered pure.

Further, certain regulations are given below which give parity to worship through finance with worship through physique or substitute one with the other.

Penalty for violation in Hajj:

Unlike Prayer and Fasting, Hajj is not purely a

(6) Bukhari, Kitab-ut-Tafseer, Chapter 2 of the Qur'an, vide Ibne Kathir, Tafseer, 1/214-215.

religious duty performed through the body; it needs finances too. By combining harmoniously the body and finances together, Hajj demonstrates how important both are. However, the involvement of the body is greater in Hajj than that of the finances.

وَاتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ فَإِذَا أَمْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَ سَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلَهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
(البقرة: 196)

"And complete the Hajj or Umrah in the service of Allah, but if ye are prevented (from completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice. And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (necessitating shaving), (he should) in compensation either fast or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice; and when ye are in peaceful conditions (again), if anyone wishes to continue the Umrah on to the Hajj, he must make an offering such as he can afford, but if he cannot afford it, he should fast three days during the Hajj and seven days on his return, making ten days in all. That is for those whose household is not in (the precincts of) the Sacred Mosque, and fear Allah, and know that Allah is strict in punishment". (2:196)

Without going into the details of this Verse, the point to be noted as relevant to the subject of discussion here is that shaving of the head while wearing Ihram (the Hajj garment) is forbidden. If the shaving becomes necessary on account of some ailment, to render permissible what is forbidden one can opt for fasting or for the sacrifice of an animal, or for charity. The alternatives offered bring on a par both worship through the medium of the body and worship through the medium of finances. Similarly, if the 'ihram' is worn separately for Umrah and donned again for Hajj or if both Umrah and Hajj are performed without the removal of "ihram", that is to say, for both "Tamathow" and "Qiran", the sacrifice of an animal is compulsory and where the sacrifice is not possible, the alternative offered is to fast for ten days.

The way to neutralise 'Zihar'

An Arab custom of legal separation from wife as a result of displeasure was for the husband to say that the wife was in the place of the mother. This kind of declaration is known as 'Zihar'. The Qur'an declared such a statement to be stupid as the legal wife could not become one's own mother by a verbal declaration. To neutralise the statement of 'Zihar', the Qur'an has the following instruction:

وَالَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا قَالُوا فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَّ ذَلِكُمْ تَوْعُظُونَ بِهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَّ ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَاطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا

ذَلِكَ لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَ
 لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝
 (المجادلة: ٣، ٤)

"But those who divorce their wives by Zihar, then wish to go back on the words they uttered - (it is ordained that such a one) should free a slave before they touch each other: this ye are admonished to perform: and Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

And if any does not have (the wherewithal), he should fast for two months consecutively before they touch each other. But if any is unable to do so, he should feed sixty indigent ones. This, that ye may show your faith in Allah and His messenger, these are limits (set by) Allah. For those who reject (Him), there is a grievous penalty." (58:3,4)

This excerpt spells out the way to circumvent Zihar. First, by way of compensation, a slave should be freed. Second, if one is not in a position to free a slave, he should fast for sixty consecutive days. Third, as a last resort, sixty poor people should be fed. Without fulfilling any one of these conditions, marital relationship cannot be reestablished.

Rule pertaining to unintentional homicide

Similar compensatory alternatives are propounded in regard to unintentional homicide. If a Muslim murders another Muslim by mistake he has to free a Muslim slave and pay blood money too. This is applicable in an Islamic state. If the victim is a citizen of a country, which is at war with Islamic state, then as a penalty a slave will be freed. There will be no payment of blood money as the heirs of the victim belong to a hostile state. If the victim is the citizen of a country which has signed a treaty of

friendship with the Islamic state, then blood money, fixed by agreement, will be paid and a Muslim slave will be set free. (The victim's religion, sex, and status (free or slave) are irrelevant.)

فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامَ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ
 اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ۝
 (النساء: ٩٢)

"For those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a fast for two months running by way of repentance to Allah: for Allah has all knowledge and all wisdom." (4:92)

One who is guilty of homicide and his family will pay the blood money. However, if the guilty person does not have the capacity to free a slave, then he will have to observe fasting for two consecutive months and he can not have a respite without the excuse recognized by Islamic law.⁽⁷⁾

How to expiate the breaking of a vow:

When a person vows to do something, he is expressing his commitment and determination. If this is not the case, then a vow is meaningless and irrelevant and the breaking of such a vow will not attract punitive action from God. If a vow is taken to reinforce a thing seriously, then one has to make amends for the breaking of such a vow.

(7) One line of thinking is that if he cannot fast for 2 months at a stretch, he can feed sixty poor people, as this alternative was prescribed in the matter of Zihar. Another line of thinking does not approve of this addition or alternative and does not want to go beyond what is prescribed. Khazin, Tafseer, 2/133; Tafseer Al- Baghavi 2/131

فَكَفَّارَتُهُ إِطْعَامُ عَشْرَةِ مَسْكِينٍ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تَطْعَمُونَ
 أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ
 ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ

(المائدة: ٨٩)

"For expiation, feed the indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days". (5:89)

In certain aspects, freeing a slave, feeding and clothing the poor, and sacrificing an animal appear to be on a par with or substitutes for fasting in these instructions.

Ibadah through the medium of the body has extraordinary importance in maintaining and strengthening human rapport with God. Proximity to God is next to impossible without it. By substituting social service and good conduct for certain kinds of worship and by offsetting the deficiencies in the kinds of worship through them, Islam has given to social service and good conduct such a high status in its scheme of things that a higher status is beyond imagination.

Chapter 5

Universality of Service

Selfish Individuals

There are people who do not see beyond their noses. Self - interest dictates every endeavour of theirs. Altruism has the least attraction for them. They propose to derive benefit from others; they do not want to help others. They are least troubled when they see others in deep distress and hardship. The desire to empathise with others does not arise. If it makes some stirring, it is successfully smothered through various excuses. They live to feather their own nest. The selfish ends remain the focal points of their activities throughout their lives. It is futile to look forward to any good turn from them.

Prisoner of the Family Concerns

Though many wish to serve, they have a limited outlook. They love their kith and kin as much as or more than they love themselves. The unfortunate part of it is this obsession with the family inhibits a wider spectrum of relationships. The welfare of those closest to them is what concerns, interests, and absorbs them all the time. They keep themselves aloof from all other things. To protect the family welfare they are ever too ready to harm others.

Islam neither plays down the importance of the individual nor marginalises the larger units like the family and the tribe. Instead the rights and responsibilities of the

individual and the family have been clearly earmarked within the framework of a broader concept of service and welfare. A Muslim is made aware that he has to tend not only his family and himself but also the society whose constituent he is. The philosophy of Ummah is behind the reconstruction of the Islamic society. The penultimate chapter of this book elucidates this viewpoint.

Service to Ummah

All persons professing Islam form an Ummah. The common factor binding them is the fellowship of faith. Their fraternity is not dependent upon genealogy. In fact, there are differences based on colour, race, language and region. In spite of them, every individual possesses rights. These rights are inalienable whether the individual is related or not, whether he is a neighbour or not, and irrespective of his profession, literacy and degree of intimacy. These inseparable rights include sincere goodwill, affection and sympathy, timely help, aid in crises and decent behaviour. The following Hadith reported by Hadrat Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) throws light on this subject:

من نفس عن مؤمن كربةً من كربةٍ الدنيا نفس الله
 عنه كربةً من كربةٍ يوم القيامة و من يسر على معسر
 يسر الله عليه في الدنيا والآخرة و من ستر مسلماً
 ستره الله في الدنيا والآخرة، والله في عون العبد ما كان
 العبد في عون أخيه

"Allah reciprocates on the Day of judgment by removing some pain of a Muslim who had helped in

removing the pain of another Muslim in this world; likewise He will provide some relief to that Muslim who provided relief to his co-religionist in this world; similarly He will cover the sins of that Muslim in this world and the next who did not expose another Muslim. As long as a Muslim remains engaged in the assistance of another Muslim, Allah remains engaged in helping the helping Muslim." (Muslim, Kitabuth thikr wa dua)

The reward for rendering assistance to a Muslim in the hour of his need is spelt out in this hadith. Islam upholds importance to such assistance. Islam presents the whole community as one well-integrated body so much so that, if one part has pain, it is felt by the whole body and the body is galvanized to provide relief to the affected part. (vide My article, "Interpersonal Relationship among Muslims" (Urdu) in Zindagi-e-Nau, New Delhi, Jan 1989)

The concept of Ummah does not promote aggressive nationalism

At this stage it may be feared that if the concept of Ummah and its welfare is so forcefully advocated, then this may ultimately lead to the strong emergence of aggressive nationalism. And this may not be entirely desirable. It may be conceded that where nationalistic feelings are nurtured, there the identity of the nation may survive, its service on a large scale may become possible and its interests may be well-guarded. However, this may also produce bias and ill-will on a national level, resulting not only in the protection of nation's interests but also in the tendency to harm and weaken other nations in the service of one's own nation. Nationalism may widen the gulf between nations. Clash of interests has fortified

dividing walls of hostility and enmity. It is not commendable if the Islamic concept of Ummah is responsible for promoting nationalistic feelings.

However, this opinion (that Ummah and nationalism go together) is unsubstantiated and has nothing to do with the Islamic concept of Ummah. Persuading a nation or members of a group to feel the pain of others, to rush help in the hour of need, and to be mutually sympathetic and cooperative can never produce prejudice; it is only a moral training and the expression of goodwill for that nation and this will pose no obstacle to the task of displaying goodwill and of extending decent behaviour towards another individual or group. Just as a man can be at once sympathetic to his family and to his community, in the same manner he can be at once restlessly solicitous of the welfare of his community as well as of the whole human race.

Service to Humanity

Islam trains its followers to be sympathetic at once towards the co-religionists and towards all human beings. Prejudice inculcates hatred and hostility. A person in the grip of national prejudice can never countenance sympathy and goodwill for other nationalities. Islam is against such prejudice as it looks upon all creation as one family unit and holds that person dear in proportion to the quantum of service he renders to creation. Hadrat Anas and Hadrat Abdullah ibne Masood (Allah's be pleased with them) report that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) maintained:

الخلق كلهم عيال الله و احبهم اليه انفعهم لعياله

"The entire creation constitutes Allah's family. Dearest to Allah is that person who is most benevolent towards the creation". (reported by Abu Y'ala and Al Bazzar through the authority of weak reporters)-
Explanation of Al Jam'i As Sagheer 1/535)

The Qur'an has ordered in general to serve and treat well the poor, the have-nots, the handicapped, the orphans, and those devoid of resources. Nowhere has it instructed that only Muslims or a prescribed group should be served and others should be ignored. The Qur'an is all for service to humanity, to those who are our own as well as to others, to co-religionists as well as to those who hold a different viewpoint, to those who belong to our speech community and to those who have a different encoding system. Every member of the human species has this right that he should not be left in the lurch and to fend for himself in his darkest hour and that his agony should be felt and an effort should be made to remove it to the extent possible. This is because in spite of the differences based on colour, race, community and region, the children of Adam constitute one fraternity as different limbs constitute one body.

Several Traditions foreground this point.

1. Hadrat Jarir bin Abdullah (Radi) reports that the Prophet said:

لا يرحم الله من لا يرحم الناس

Allah shows no mercy to him who is not merciful to other human beings. (Bukhari Kitab-ut Tawheed; Muslim, kitabul Fadail)

2. Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar (May Allah be pleased with both) narrates this statement of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him):

الراحمون يرحمهم الرحمن ارحموا من فى الارض
يرحمكم من فى السماء

Ar-Rahman shows mercy to the merciful and so be kind to the inhabitants of the earth and He who is in the sky will be kind to you. (Tirmithi, Kitabul birr wa silah)

3. Hadrat Abdullah bin Masood (Radi) reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

لن تؤمنوا حتى ترحموا

"you cannot attain to faith without the practice of mercy."

The Companions replied that every one of them was compassionate.

انه ليس برحمة احدكم صاحبه ولكن رحمة الناس العامة

The Prophet made it clear that he was not referring to compassion and sympathy that people show to friends and that he was referring to compassion that should be shown to mankind in general. (Fathul Bari, 10/337)

4. Hadrat Abu Huraira (Radi) said that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

لا تنزع الرحمة الا من شقى

To be deprived of mercy is to be deprived of auspiciousness (Musnade Ahmed, 2/ 301)

5. Hadrat Abu Huraira (Radi) reports that one day the Prophet approached a seated gathering and inquired if

they wished to know how good and bad people could be identified and distinguished. The addressees remained silent. When the Prophet repeated the inquiry a third time, one of them made bold to say that the Prophet could tell them who was good and who was bad among them. The Prophet then said:

خيركم من يرجى خيره و يؤمن شره و شرکم من لا
يرجى خيره ولا يؤمن شره

The best amongst you is one from whom people expect only good and do not feel threatened and insecure; the worst is one who does no good and is a menace to others. (Masnad-e-Ahmed, 2/368)

These Traditions contain instruction for good behaviour towards others without distinction. This proves to the hilt that we should help everyone in need of our sympathy and help. It is totally against the ethos and precepts of Islam to divide people into groups and parties, or to make a distinction between people who belong and people who do not belong, between the known and the unknown, between co-religionists and followers of other faiths in the matter of good conduct and social service.

Another aspect of these Traditions is that they throw light on the parity between social service and the act of worshipping God day and night. They explain how through social service man can become a favourite of God, secure proximity to God, and His mercy, be rid of stony-heartedness and wickedness, and become a virtuous, righteous and ideal member of the society. How can a Muslim then deny the excellence and greatness of social service? These Traditions make social service so irresistibly fascinating that further persuasion becomes redundant.

Chapter 6

They Deserve Service and Good conduct

It has been elucidated in the foregoing pages that Islam teaches the followers to help those who need help. This teaching is made specific through the listing of those who deserve service and good conduct. It is in human nature to be fond of parents, spouse, children and other close relatives. As a man feels spontaneously inclined towards them, he serves them as though it were his moral obligation. He does not extend this emotional attachment to others and so his behaviour towards them is different. Islam has a well-defined protocol with regard to interpersonal relationship, and hierarchical rights. Islam calls upon its followers not to look upon service to relatives alone as their duty but to extend this sense of duty to the task of serving those not so related. The area of service and good conduct should be so enlarged as to include both the family and the entire society. A Muslim should get ready to serve humanity as though it were his own family. The following verse points out who deserve service and good conduct and who should not be ignored and neglected.

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَ
بِإِذَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي
الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ

السَّبِيلِ ۚ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ
مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ۝ (النساء: ٣٦)

"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companions by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and what your right hands possess; for Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious". (4:36)

Though there is no mention in this verse of all vulnerable and deprived sections of society whose service the Qur'an enjoins, this verse enables us to comprehend the sympathetic and loving behaviour it advocates. So here a brief elucidation of this verse is warranted. It may be noted that the Qur'an's preferred term for service is 'Ihsan' - a comprehensive term encompassing all aspects of service, like endearment, affection, fulfilment of all needs, grant of more than what is legitimately required, etc.

Good Conduct towards parents

Immediately after the instruction to worship one God, there is the list of those who deserve good treatment and parents top the list.

وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا (النساء: ٣٦)

"Do good to parents".

Every religion teaches that parents should be served. The Qur'an reiterates this teaching in several places after teaching the worship of one God. This is to indicate that God's favours outnumber the favours of others. The favours of the parents come next. They play a vital role in man's genetic identity, his birth, upbringing, protection,

education and training, and economic and moral uplift. Without their care, his growth, nay his very survival would be jeopardised. Even the very ignorant and poverty-stricken parents make unprecedented sacrifices for their children. A glimpse of God's love can be seen in the parental affection. To express our gratitude for His favours we worship God. Parents do not share equal status with God and so they cannot be worshipped but it is mandatory to be extremely courteous to them and this will meet the demand of gratitude towards the parents for their favours. The Qur'an insists upon this gratitude to the parents as a corollary to the gratitude to God.

أَنْ أَشْكُرَ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ ۝ (لقمان: ١٣)

"Show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is (your final) Goal". (31:14)

The present - day civilization has disrupted the family system. Simultaneously the lofty moral values associated with the system are being eroded. As a consequence aged parents are being adversely affected. It is being debated in all seriousness how they should be disposed of when they have ceased to be useful and how long their burden should be borne when they cannot cooperate in the ordering of the future. These very old people about whom such a debate is raging did not abandon their children and the present generation when they were helpless, and totally dependent upon their mercy and care. Instead, they strained every nerve to look after them and to make them competent and fit to participate in the struggle for survival. The Qur'an teaches that old parents in particular should be treated with utmost respect.

إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا
أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۖ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا
جَنَاحَ الدُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتُنِي
صَغِيرًا ۝ (بنی اسرائیل: ۲۳، ۲۴)

"Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them; but address them in terms of honour.

And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: My Lord! bestow on them Thy mercy even as they cherished me in childhood." (17: 23, 24)

Do good to kinsfolk:

وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ (النساء: ۳۶)

Do good to those who are near of kin (4: 36)

The relatives are mentioned soon after the parents here and in other places in the Qur'an to suggest that in the scheme of rights this sequence has to be followed. The relatives derive their status on account of their link to the parents. At the core are the parents, and the closer the relative, the higher the right. Good conduct towards the relatives is a concession to the rights of the womb; the Qur'an drives home this point. The identity of the righteous people is described as follows:

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَ
يَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ۝ (الرعد: ۲۱)

"Those who join together those things which Allah has commanded to be joined, hold their Lord in awe and fear the terrible reckoning." (13:21)

Good conduct towards relatives makes social life pleasant. Its absence makes social life unpleasant. That's why, its value is extolled. Suleiman bin Aamir (Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

الصدقة على المسكين صدقة وهي على ذي الرحم

ثنتان صدقة وصلة

Charity to a poor person (unrelated) is mere charity; charity to a poor relative is both an act of charity and an act of good conduct towards relatives. (Tirmithi, Nasai)

That is, it fetches a two-fold merit - it has the dimension of a common act of charity as much as the dimension of a gesture of goodwill to a relative.

Though one is naturally drawn towards one's relatives, there is some vulnerability in the relationship. Trivial lapses are blown out of proportion, creating heartburns and have a damaging effect. A hadith teaches us to nip the evil in the bud, and to do everything possible to maintain the status quo. Good conduct is the ideal solution.

Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar (Allah be pleased with both) reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ليس الواصل بالمُكافئ ولكن الواصل الَّذِي إِذَا

انقطعت رحمها وصلها

Good conduct towards one's relatives is not just reciprocal, it should be upheld and practised when the relationship has come under a severe strain or to a breaking point. (Bukhari, Kitabul Adab, Abu Dawood, Kitabuz Zakath)

Hadrat Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) narrates:

ان رجلا قال يا رسول الله ان لى قرابة اصلهم و
يقطعونى و احسن اليهم و يسيئون الى و احلم
عنهم و يجهلون على فقال لان كنت كما قلت
فكانما تسفهم المل ولا يزال معك من الله ظهير
ما دمت على ذالك

one man said to the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him), "I have a few relatives, I respect them as relatives but they sever relationship with me; I treat them well but they ill-treat me- I overlook their ill-treatment of me, yet they persist in their hostility towards me. The Prophet replied, "If what you say is true, you are filling their mouths with hot ash. As long as you maintain your behaviour, an angelic aid from Allah will remain with you." (Muslim, Kitabul birr)

The phrase 'filling the mouth with hot ash' connotes that the person's good conduct will compel his enemies' conscience to reprimand them and they will be so much ill-at-ease as they would be if their mouths were stuffed with hot ash. In other words, the person's good conduct would make the enemies regret their behaviour, and Allah's help would form a bulwark against their evil designs.

Do good to orphans:

The rights of parents and relatives precede all other rights. These rights have to be fulfilled. Then come the rights of the needy, the deprived and the weak members of the society. The orphans and the poor form the most vulnerable section of the society. So the Qur'an instructs,

وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ

"Do good to orphans and those in need."

The innocent child, after losing the father, is deprived of the father's sincerity, affection and care. These qualities are vitally important for the child's upbringing, education and training, and sometimes economic growth and security. So it becomes the responsibility of the society to fulfil the child's needs and not to make the child feel the absence of the father. Any failure of the society in this regard will not only hamper the child's growth but also render the child physically weak and the cultivation of his cognitive skills will leave much to be desired. It will not be surprising if the child nurtures rebellious feelings against the stony-hearted and ruthless society and, instead of becoming a good citizen, the child may prove to be harmful to the society.

The Qur'an and the Traditions are reiteratively emphatic on the subject of the various aspects of the orphans - their upbringing, protection, education and training, safe custody of their assets, and the upholding of their rights. Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

كافل اليتيم له او لغيره انا وهو كهاتين واشار مالك
بالسبابة والوسطى

The guardian of a related or unrelated orphan and I will be so near each other as the forefinger and the middle finger of mine are. (The narrator Málík used his own forefinger and middle finger as a demonstration)
(Muslim, Kitabuz zuhd)

It is easy to exploit and snatch away his rights

because of the weakness and immaturity of an orphan. The Qur'an forewarns people with such a tendency:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي
بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا وَ سَيَصْلُونَ سَعِيرًا ۝ (النساء: ١٠)

"Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans,
eat up a fire into their own bodies: they will soon be
enduring a blazing Fire." (4:10)

The entire Islamic society has to bear the responsibility not only of looking after the orphans but also of ensuring that they grow into God-fearing, well behaved, and cultured human beings in order that they may be counted as an asset and not as a liability.

Do good to those in need:

We are expected to do good not only to the orphans but also to those in need. The Qur'an describes the needy as 'Miskin'. Physically weak and financially disadvantaged, they are not in a position to make ends meet and to participate in economic pursuits. Islam aims at removing the obstacles and helping in all possible ways those beset with economic worries so that their needs are fulfilled and they secure financial stability. Attention has been drawn repeatedly in the Qur'an and the Hadith to the need for good conduct towards the needy and the have - nots and to their moral and legal rights.

فَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ذَٰلِكَ
خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝
(الروم: ٣٨)

"So give what is due to kindred, the needy and the

wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the Countenance of Allah, and it is they who will prosper."

(30:38)

It is generally held that Miskin is a beggar or seeker of alms. The act of begging is not the result of abject poverty and utter helplessness. Some people, having this deplorable habit, take to the profession of begging without any justification. So they do not come under the definition of 'Miskin'; they are only pseudo - Miskin. In sharp contrast to them, there are people genuinely in need and yet their sense of dignity and self-respect is so sharp and well-cultivated that seeking alms goes against their grain. The Qur'an exhorts that such genuinely needy people, and in particular, Muslim missionaries concentrating on the service to Islam and unable to pay equal attention to improving their economic lot, should be actively sought. Their plight is such that

يَحْسِبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيََاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ۚ تَعْرِفُهُمْ

بِسِيمَتِهِمْ ۚ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ الْحَافَاءَ

(البقرة: ٢٧٣)

"The ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want, you shall know them by their (unfailing) mark: they beg not importunately from all and sundry." (2:273)

Explication of this verse is found in a report conveyed by Hadrat Abu Huraira. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ليس المسكين الذين يطوف على الناس ترده

اللقمة واللقمتان والتمرة والتمران ولكن المسكين

الذي لا يجد غنى يغنيه ولا يفطن له فيتصدق عليه و

لا يقوم فيسأل الناس

"He is not a miskín who goes with a begging bowl from person to person, and to whom two morsels of food or two dates are given. Miskín is one who, in spite of the scarcity of resources to meet the basic needs, lives in such a way that people do not have an inkling of his condition that he needs alms and who does not get up and move about asking for charity."

(Bukhari, Muslim, Kitab-uz-Zakath)

In this way the need to help the truly modest and revered members of the society is highlighted; information about their financial worries is hard to come by and yet they deserve help most.

Good Conduct toward Neighbours

وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ

(النساء: ٣٦)

"Do good to neighbours who are near and neighbours who are strangers and to the companions by your side."

It is obvious that the rights of the neighbours in whose midst one is obliged to live and from whose company one cannot isolate oneself are greater than the rights of those with whom one does not have a similar relationship. The Qur'anic instruction refers to three categories of neighbours - a neighbour who is also a relative, a neighbour without kinship, a neighbour by chance or a person whose company is forced upon one in a journey or office or some educational institution or factory or some business. It is the teaching of every religion that neighbours should be treated well; Islam is no exception. However, the Islamic concept of a

neighbour has a wider connotation. Even a person whose company one has for a short duration is entitled to rights. If the company is constant, the companion's rights increase a great deal.

In a hadith, narrated by both Hadrat Ayesha and Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar (Allah be pleased with them all), the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ما زال جبريل يوصيني بالجار حتى ظننت انه سيورثه

"The archangel Gabriel used to lay emphasis so much upon the neighbour's rights that I began to wonder if he would fix a share for the neighbour in the inheritance." (Bukhari, Kitabul Adab, Muslim, Kithabul Birr)

Islam goes much farther than the elimination of discomfort to the neighbour; its objective is to ensure moral and material help to him and an extremely civilized behaviour towards him. Every member of the society must have this faith and assurance that he is surrounded by men of goodwill from whom no evil can be expected and who will rush to his aid in the hour of crisis and who will stand by him through thick and thin like surrogate brothers. The two following Traditions give a fair measure of the ideals dear to Islam in this regard.

Hadrat Abu Sayeed Khuza'ii says, "The Prophet said three times on oath: That person is not a Believer. (On inquiry, he explained)

الذين لا يأمن جاره بوائقه

"from whose mischief and sudden flare-up, the neighbour is insecure."

This hadith describes the act of inflicting pain on the neighbour as a violation and negation of faith (Iman).

In another Tradition, it is stated that indifference to the basic needs of the neighbour militates against faith. Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas' (Allah be pleased with both) said, "I have heard the Prophet saying:

ليس المؤمن الذي يشبع و جاره جائع الى جنبه

That person cannot be a Believer who has eaten his fill unmindful of the starving person next door."

(Miskathul Masabih, Kitabul Aadam)

It may be inferred from this that faith stands for providing security and help to the neighbour when he is upset physically, mentally and financially.

Do good to the Wayfarer (you meet)

Ibne Sabeel (son of the way) is a term for the wayfarer in Arabic. Serving strangers and travellers has always been looked upon as an act of charity. Inns were built for them. Arrangements for their food and comfortable stay were made. Now that era of service is gone. Tourism has become an industry and five-star hotels and motels dominate the scene. Not all can have access to them; not all tourist problems are solved by them. Away from home and on a journey one can face many a hardship. Scarcity of funds, ill-health, non-availability of proper board and lodging, obstacles in reaching places for business and for other needs - these are common features. If one is visiting a foreign country, there may be other worries under international laws. The hardships faced by a traveller today have become more complicated. Islamic society has this responsibility of ensuring that the traveller is not a victim of xenophobia and is treated extremely well and the purpose for which

he left his hearth and home is not sacrificed at the altar of problems inherent in a journey.

Good Conduct towards the Slaves and subaltern employees

وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ (النساء: ٣٦)

"Do good to those your right hands possess" (4 : 36)

Last but not the least, slaves are included too in the list of those who deserve kind treatment. Slavery was in vogue centuries prior to the revelation of the Qur'an. Slaves were subjected to inhuman treatment as they could claim no rights. This is not the place to discuss all the steps that Islam took towards the gradual abolition of slavery. However, the first step it took in this direction was to determine and prescribe the rights of the slaves and to enjoin good conduct towards them. Of several Traditions dealing with the subject, only one is presented here. Hadrat Abu Tharr (Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) instructed:

هم اخوانكم جعلهم الله تحت ايديكم فاطعموهم مما
تأكلون والبسوهم مما تلبسون ولا تكلفوهم ما
يغلبهم فان كلفتموهم فاعينوهم

These slaves are your brothers; let there be no difference between the food you take and the food you give them, and between the quality of clothes you wear and the quality of clothes you give them to wear. Do not overstrain them with work. If you are obliged to do so, share the burden with them. (Bukhari, kitabul ataq; Muslim, Kitabul Iman)

After concluding the list of the people who deserve good treatment, there is this observation:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا (النساء: ٣٦)

Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious

Mukhtal (the arrogant) and Fakhoor (the vainglorious) are Arabic synonyms. Still they have a semantic nuance differentiating them. The former displays pride through his walk and gait; the latter, through his tall claims. If one exudes pride through speech and action, one forfeits God's approval. Pride inhibits a person both from worshipping God and serving people; this is unfortunate because it is by virtue of these two activities man sustains his humanity and, without them, he lowers himself to a deplorable level.

Legal Protection to a moral Precept

The moral precept is: Do good to parents, kinsfolk, self-respecting but poverty - stricken people and to the weaker and vulnerable sections of the society. This teaching was disseminated both in Mecca and Medina for as long as the revelation of the Qur'an continued. In this way, a long and sustained campaign was carried on to promote in the society fraternal feelings of goodwill, sympathy and love, and to recognise that the poor and the disadvantaged sections have their rights and deserve an ideal deal from others. Then, at one particular stage, Islam defined the rights of all and made them legally binding so that no one is subjected to domination and no right is usurped and snatched away. (For further details, another book of mine, "Islam - Insani Huqooq ka Pasban," may be consulted.)

Chapter 7

There are several ways and means of serving

The weak, the poor, and the needy have numerous champions ever ready to espouse their cause through lip sympathy but they have very few genuine champions who will deliver the goods for them. The people caught in the stranglehold of economic distress stand in need of financial help more than anything else. Reassuring words of endearment and consolation can but provide psychological relief for a short duration but the bitter realities of economic distress will stubbornly remain and cannot be wished away.

Service by means of wealth

Islam calls upon its followers to spend money in the service and for the welfare of humanity quite generously and not to think that such spending is a waste of resources. What is spent on others is to all intents and purposes what is saved. On the Day of Judgment, this spending will fetch unlimited gain and merit. In general the Qur'an mentions Zakath and charity along with Prayer, so that one who glorifies God should not miss the significance of charity and should ever be mindful of it.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

(البقرة: ١١٠)

"And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity and whatever good you send forth for your souls before you, you shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees well all that you do." (2:110)

... وَاقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا
حَسَنًا وَمَا تَقْدِمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ
خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
رَحِيمٌ (المزمل: ٢٠)

"And establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity, and loan to Allah, a beautiful loan. And whatever good you send forth for your souls, you shall find it in Allah's presence - yea, better and greater in reward. And seek ye Allah's grace for Allah is oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful." (73: 20)

The Needy have a claim upon the wealth of Muslims

One quality prominent in the Qur'anic delineation of the Faithful is that their wealth is not the exclusive preserve of theirs and their heirs and that they acknowledge the right of the poor, the weak, and the have-nots of the society to a share in their wealth.

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِلْسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (الذاريات: ١٩)

"And in their wealth and possessions (was remembered) the right of the (needy), him who asked, and him who (for some reason) was prevented (from asking). (51:19)

فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ لِلْسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

(المعارج: ٢٣، ٢٤)

"And those in whose wealth is a recognised right for

(the needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking)." (70:24, 25)

The persons from far and near having a claim upon a man's wealth and on whom it should be spent are mentioned in the following verse:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ وَ الْيَتَامَى وَ الْمَسْكِينِ وَ ابْنِ
السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (البقرة: ٢١٥)

"They ask you what they should spend (in charity). Say: whatever you spend that is good, is for parents, kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers. And whatever you do that is good - Allah knows it well." (2:215)

Thus, Islam advises its followers to spend money on the rightful claimants and on the needy and motivates them to do so by mentioning what rewards can be expected for such spending. (Please see chapter 10 of this book for additional discussion)

Ideal Behaviour:

Social service and ideal behaviour are words which usually denote financial help. However, Islam repeatedly reminds the followers that these words have meanings extending beyond fulfilling material needs to include love, sympathy, reassurance, and the civilities which are expected in a decent interpersonal relationship. Man's needs are not confined to two loaves of bread to fill his stomach with, to clothes to cover his body and to a roof over his head for shelter, and to medical treatment in a hospital in the case of his illness. Contempt and

humiliation are not expected by man in general and a poor man in particular. Man looks forward to the practice of equality, and to both medicines and nursing when he falls ill; he wants his virtue, if any, to be recognised. He wants forgiveness and forbearance when he errs. He expects society's participation in his happiness and sorrow. He wants solid and substantial monetary help along with the open communication links, social contacts, and a standard morality in interpersonal connections. Without these ingredients, the concept of social service and ideal behaviour that the Qur'an and Hadith advocate cannot be rendered complete. For example, parents do not require food and clothes only, they demand loving care and regard from their children in order to obviate their geriatric disadvantages. The unnerving feeling of being all alone in a wide, wide world and of having ceased to be socially useful should be kept away from them. The children should give due consideration to their debility and old age, recognise their seniority and treat them with utmost respect. Such behaviour towards the parents is described as 'Ihsan' in the Qur'an.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ

(الاسراء: ٢٣)

"The Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents." (17:23)

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا... (الاحقاف: ١٥)

"We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents." (46:15)

In these and similar verses, children are advised to treat the parents by way of Ihsan, which represents giving

in excess of what is legally due. Ihsan elevates good conduct to ideal behaviour.

The Qur'an advises man to behave with parents in an ideal manner. If they happen to worship many gods and to force the children to worship many gods, the children should refuse to obey because polytheism has no scriptural sanction. In other matters, the children should behave with parents in a manner approved by social convention.

وَإِنْ جَاهَدَكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ
عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا...

(لقمان: ١٥)

"But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration)." (31:15)

The Qur'an has not ordered the descendants to bear the economic burden of maintaining their parents; it has advised them to treat the parents with magnanimity and in this advice the material needs of the parents occupy the prime place automatically by virtue of their inherent importance. It is stated in 'Hidaya' - a standard manual of Hanafi jurisprudence - that it is mandatory for the son to feed his parents, whether they follow the faith or not. This instruction is based on 31:15 wherein the Qur'an says that the treatment given to non-Muslim parents should conform to 'Ma'roof' - well-known social norm. It naturally follows that their material needs should be compulsorily fulfilled, "It is not a happy state of affairs when one profits by God's favours but allows one's parents to starve to death." (Hidaya, vol 2, PP 425-426.

For further details, please read another work of mine "Rapport with and Rights of Non-Muslims")

No doubt there are occasions when one word of sympathy, one statement exuding love, and one utterance of goodwill may carry more weight and value than financial assistance. The Qur'an gives priority to sweet speech and courteous address over and above Prayer and Zakath in the following verse:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَاقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

(البقرة: ٨٣)

"Speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practise regular charity". (2:83)

A poor person can be helped by giving him money but a man in possession of wealth is no longer in need of our money. However, every human being hankers after sympathy, love and upright behaviour and on this issue no distinction can be made between the rich and the poor.

Certain Alternative Ways of Serving

In addition to financial assistance, there are other alternative ways too as enunciated by the Traditions. Helping the handicapped, escorting the blind, removal of hurtful objects from the path, handing over a glass filled with water, welcoming a person without a frown, and displaying politeness in interpersonal dealings - these are alternative ways of serving and come under the category of 'Sadaqa' as much as financial assistance is an act of charity. Hadrat Abu Musa Ash'ari reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

على كل مسلم صدقة قالوا فان لم يجد قال فيعمل بيديه
 فينفع نفسه و يتصدق قالوا فان لم يستطع او لم يفعل قال
 فيعين ذا الحاجة الملهوف قالوا فان لم يفعل قال فليأمر
 بالخير او قال بالمعروف قال فان لم يفعل قال
 فليمسك عن الشر فانه له صدقة

Giving 'sadaqa' is obligatory upon a Muslim. The Companions wanted to know what one should do if one had nothing to give. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) suggested that one should do manual labour and what one earns thereby could be spent on one's self and on others too. The Companions wished to know how one should give when one could not do manual labour. The Prophet suggested that one should offer help to the needy or to a person in distress, (and it need not be financial help). The Companions wanted to know what alternatives were open to one who was not in a position to offer help to the needy. The Prophet suggested that the alternative could be an advice to do good or suggested the promotion of some righteous quality. The Companions were eager to know what one should do if one could not give such an advice. The Prophet suggested that one could at least desist from committing an evil and it would be sadaqa for him if he renounced evil. (Bukhari, Kitabul Adab; Muslim, Kitabuz Zakath)

Expert exponents of Hadith have made the following deductions in the light of the above Tradition.

The affluent can afford to give charity in the form of money but sadaqa need not always and in particular be associated with money. There are other avenues for sadaqa; which in ordinary circumstances should be easy to perform. This particular Tradition does not aim at giving

a sequence of good activities in the decreasing order of importance but aims at giving random examples for clarification. The aim is to tell man that he can choose one of the alternatives according to his convenience and that if he proposes to choose all the alternatives and act upon them then he is quite free to do so. One of the deductions from this Tradition is that where financial assistance is warranted there it should be deemed an indispensable priority. In its place the other alternatives mentioned have only secondary importance. This Tradition points out that it is sadaqa not to commit evil. If Mr. X desists from doing harm to Mr. Y, it is sadaqa to Mr. Y. If Mr. X does no harm to himself, it is sadaqa to himself. The moral precept enshrined in this Tradition is that in dealings with others affection and sympathy should dominate. This is possible whether money is involved in these dealings or not. Monetary help can be rendered in two ways - through ready cash or through wages earned. Help by other means can be rendered in two ways - removal of the difficulty already present or abstaining from causing fresh difficulty. The Tradition under discussion covers all these alternative forms of charity. (Ibne Hajar, Fathul Bari: 3/198)

Each act of kindness is charity

This Tradition has another aspect and it is this that the concept of service brings to mind legendary acts of heroism and generosity and that not every one feels that he is capable of performing them, and where ordinary acts of service are concerned, people feel that they are too easy to be considered significant. Consequently, this mindset blocks the performance of both significant and

small acts of kindness. This Tradition corrects such a mindset. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) made it clear in several observations of his that man should offer assistance irrespective of its being significant or trivial. Every help is an act of charity and magnanimity bringing in its wake reward and recognition. Some relevant Traditions are presented hereunder.

Hadrat Abu Huraira's report is that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

يعدل بين الاثنين صدقة ويعين الرجل على دابته فيحمل
عليها او يرفع عليها متاعه صدقة والكلمة الطيبة صدقة
و كل خطوة يخطوها الى الصلوة صدقة و يميظ الاذى
عن الطريق صدقة

"It is sadaqa to bring about a compromise between two persons; it is sadaqa to give someone a leg up; it is sadaqa to keep someone's luggage on the back of a beast of burden; it is sadaqa to be fair and square in speech; every step towards the mosque is sadaqa; and removing anything hurtful to the passers-by from the way is sadaqa too." (Bukhari, Kitabul Jihad; Muslim, Kitabuz Zakat)

A report narrated by Hadrat Abu Tharr elaborates further:

قال رسول الله ﷺ تبسمك في وجه اخيك لك
صدقة و امرك بالمعروف و نهيك عن المنكر لك
صدقة و ارشادك الرجل في الارض الضلال لك صدقة
و اماطتك الاذى والشوك والعظم عن الطريق لك صدقة
و افراغك من دلوك في دلو اخيك لك صدقة

"The Prophet said: It is sadaqa to meet a brother with

a smile; it is sadaqa to enjoin the good and prohibit the evil; it is sadaqa to guide a person in an area where one may get easily lost; it is sadaqa to keep the pathway clean and free from things like sharp thorns and bones (and iron nails); it is sadaqa to fill your brother's bucket with water from your own." (Tirmithi, chapters on Birr)

The examples of sadaqa enumerated above show how comprehensive the concept of sadaqa is and how each act of help will fetch a reward. These Traditions envisage different ways of ensuring humanity's service and welfare. Some of the ways of serving humanity just require a basic impulse for their easy execution. Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

كل معروف صدقة

"Every good act is sadaqa." (Bukhari, Kitabul Adab)

This is a seminal observation which encompasses all forms of social service. It is sadaqa and act of munificence to serve humanity in any manner, and one who performs it deserves a rich reward.

Everyone knows only too well that it is a good deed to offer charity and sadaqa. Nobody denies the significance and profitability of such an offering. When it is said that every act of service and human welfare is sadaqa, the human heart begins to appreciate how invaluable it is. In addition, Muslims are advised not to turn away from doing a small act of goodness considering it to be of no consequence because it is improper to desist from doing good to humanity. Abu Tharr's report says that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) remarked:

لا تحقرن من المعروف شيئا ولو ان تلق اخاك بوجه
طليق

Do not run down the importance of any welfare act, even if it be the act of welcoming your brother with a smile. (Muslim, Kitabul birr wa silah)

Service to humanity should be rendered irrespective of its form and quantum, because it is a considerable means of emancipation from the punishment of Hell. One day the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) narrated the horrors of Hell, sought refuge from them, and advised:

اتقوا النار ولو بشق تمرة فان لم يكن فبكلمة طيبة

"Keep yourself safe from Hell. If you don't have anything to spare, offer at least a piece of date as a sadaqa and if you don't have even a piece of date, make a sweet exhortation (and save yourself from Hell)." (Bukhari, Kitabul Adab; Muslim, Kitabuz Zakat)

When someone in distress receives help, it enlivens and relieves him. Similarly, eloquent counselling lifts up his spirits and makes him cheerful. That is why, both methods are different forms of sadaqa. (Ibne Hajar, Fathul Bari 10/345)

The fact of the matter is that the area of humanity's welfare and social service is so extensive that every man can discharge his duty to his fullest satisfaction and should really discharge it. For this purpose neither personal wealth nor official subsidy is needed because by means of wealth and government help, service to mankind can be rendered in a few sectors only. There are many areas where the individual's high moral calibre will be of

immense help. The official organs of the state can grant pension to the disabled persons, employment to the unemployed, shelter to the homeless, medical help to the patient but in spite of all resources they cannot play the role of a mother, a father, a spouse, a son, a brother, a friend, a neighbour or a law-abiding citizen. These individuals provide emotional relief and interpersonal dealings of a sublime nature which are beyond the scope of a major or minor organ of the state.

Chapter 8

Interim Relief : Its Need and Value

One way to serve and deal fairly with mankind is to provide interim relief. There are occasions when man needs immediate and urgent help and he may sustain a severe loss if there is a slight laxity in rushing help. There are occasions when the benefactor may be in a position to give timely help only and he may not have the means necessary to continue to help for a longer period. Islam is seized of this delicate predicament. So, on the one hand, man is persuaded to provide whatever help to anyone who needs it at any given time:- and, on the other, instruction is given that no effort should be spared in the matter of rendering temporary help to whatever extent it is possible to a man in dire need of it.

Some ways of providing interim and emergency relief are given in the following paragraphs.

Feeding the Hungry:

Feeding the hungry is one instance of immediate and provisional relief. It is the fundamental right of a hungry person that his hunger should be immediately satisfied. While praising Allah's devotees who deserve the eternal blessings of Heaven, the Qur'an comments:

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ۝

إِنَّمَا نَطْعِمُكُمْ لَوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا
 إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا (الذھر: ۸-۱۰)

"And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive (saying), "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks." "We only fear a Day of distressful wrath from the side of our Lord." (76:8-10)

Many Traditions record the value of the act of feeding the hungry. A few are mentioned below. Hadrat Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-Aas reports that a certain man asked the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him):

أَيُّ الْإِسْلَامِ خَيْرٌ؟

"What is the best (version of) Al-Islam?"

(Possibly the question aimed at finding out the most prominent characteristic of Islam, relating to social service and human welfare). The Prophet replied:

تَطْعَمُ الطَّعَامَ وَتَقْرَى السَّلَامَ عَلَى مَنْ عَرَفْتَ وَمَنْ لَمْ تَعْرِفْ

Feeding the hungry and offering salam to the people you know and to the people you don't know. (Bukhari, Kitabul Iman, Muslim, Kitabul Iman)

Hadrat Abdullah bin Salam says, "When Allah's Messenger arrived in Madinah, I appeared before him. As soon as I glanced at his face, it struck me that it could never be a liar's face. In his address he said,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَفْشُوا السَّلَامَ وَاطْعَمُوا الطَّعَامَ وَصَلُّوا
 الْبَارِحَافَ وَصَلُّوا بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامُ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِسَلَامٍ

"O people! Make mutual greeting of peace a social custom by raising its frequency level. Feed the hungry, preserve family ties, and offer Prayers in the

night when people are asleep. You will enter Heaven peacefully." (Mishkatul Masabih, Kitabuz Zakat. My article "The weak-in the shade of Islam" published in Zindagi, a monthly magazine, Rampur, Aug-Sep. 1978, contains many other Traditions, relating to this subject.)

It is obvious that the act of the feeding the hungry is a small act of kindness. However, if a whole society is aroused and awakened to realize its importance, then no one will be made to bear the pangs of hunger. Moreover such an awakened society will very soon and very easily discover the panacea for starvation and poverty. The economy of the nascent Islamic state of Medina was not quite viable and so the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) devised various strategies to solve the problem of starvation and poverty. One such strategy was to persuade the citizens to feed the hungry in the following way. He said:

طعام الاثنين كافى الثلاثة و طعام الثلاثة كافى الاربعة

"The food meant for two may suffice for three; the food meant for three can satisfy the hunger of four persons." (Bukhari, chapter on food; Muslim, chapter on Ashraba)

This is Hadrat Abu Huraira's report. The report of Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah makes ever greater claims. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

طعام الواحد يكفى الاثنين و طعام الاثنين يكفى الاربعة و
طعام الاربعة يكفى الثمانية

"Food for one can suffice for two; food for two, for four; food for four, for eight." (Muslim, Kitabul Ashraba, Ibne Majah, Chapters on food)

A report passed on by Hadrat Umar (Allah be pleased with him) has a similar context. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ان طعام الواحد يكفى الاثنين و ان طعام الاثنين يكفى
الثلاثة والاربعة و ان طعام الاربعة يكفى الخمسة
والسنة

"A man can easily and satisfactorily share his food with two; two men can share their food with one more or two more persons; four men's food can satisfy five or six persons." (ibid.)

The number of persons whose hunger will be satisfied varies from Tradition to Tradition but this variation is no contradiction. In the first Tradition it is claimed that food meant for two can satisfy the hunger of three; in the next two Traditions, it is claimed that food meant for one can suffice for two. That is both persons will have the wherewithal to live and both will survive. These claims relate to persons and circumstances. The thrust of these Traditions is to persuade each person to share his food with other hungry persons, believing that Allah will bless the food present with increase and the hunger of everyone will be satisfied.

A report of Hadrat Ayesha (Allah be pleased with her) gives us some idea of how earnestly the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) was urging his followers to look after the indigent and to feed the hungry. She narrates that one day a nanny-goat was slaughtered and the flesh was distributed, among the poor. The Prophet wanted to know if any piece was left undistributed. She replied that the entire quantity was distributed and only an

upper part of the foreleg remained. On hearing this reply, the Prophet remarked, "Actually, the entire quantity has been preserved, except what has remained undistributed." What the Prophet was driving home was that the reward for what has been given in charity has been guaranteed and so it need not be presumed that what has been given has not been saved.

During the blessed era of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him), there was a custom of drying the flesh of the ritually sacrificed animal and using the dried flesh for a number of days. When famine struck, he advised the people not to preserve the flesh for more than three days. Hadrat Ayesha (Allah be pleased with her) gives the justification for the order in these words:

اراد ان يطعم الغنى الفقير

"His intention was that the rich should feel obliged to share the flesh with the poor." (Bukhari, Kitabul At'amah)

Feeding the indigent was more or less an avocation with a few Companions. How much they were interested in it and what sense of commitment they had towards it can be gauged from a few incidents.

Hadrat Nafe says that Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar (Allah be pleased with both) never ate a meal without the company of a poor person. (ibid.)

Hadrat Suhaib (Allah be pleased with him) was famed for his extreme preoccupation with the act of feeding a large number of poor people. Hadrat Umar (Allah be pleased with him) deprecated this preoccupation. Hadrat Suhaib replied:

ان رسول الله ﷺ كان يقول خياركم من اطعم الطعام و
رد السلام فذاك الذي يحملني على ان اطعم الطعام

"The Prophet used to say: The best individual is one who feeds the poor and returns the greeting. This exhortation eggs me on to take upon myself the burden of feeding the poor." (Musnad-e-Ahmed, 6/16)

A relevant but a very moving anecdote is available in the books of Traditions. It contains a lofty example and an inspiring moral.

Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that one day a man appeared before the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) and said that he was starving and in deep trouble. So the Prophet sent for food from the house of one his wives. There only potable water was available. He sent for food from the house of another wife but with no better success. He sent for food from the houses of other wives, one after another, and the state of affairs in all the houses of his wives was uniform. The Prophet was ultimately obliged to seek help from the gathering present before him and he promised that Allah would show mercy to that person who volunteered to feed the hungry person. One Ansari, Abu Talha (Allah be pleased with him) according to some reports, volunteered to help and took the starving person to his house. He asked his wife, on reaching home, whether there was any food available. She replied that there was food for the children. Then he advised his wife to send the children to sleep without food somehow, and to serve the food. He wanted that on the pretext of trimming the wick she should blow out the lamp. He also wanted that in the pitch darkness both he and his wife should pretend to partake of the

food. The wife carried out the plan suggested by the husband; the lamp was extinguished. Both gave the impression through their gestures that they were eating along with the guest. Finally the guest satisfied his hunger and the host and the hostess went to bed hungry. Next morning Hadrat Abu Talha called on the Prophet who told him that Allah was much pleased with what he and his wife had done to feed the guest during the preceding night. The following verse was in connection with that incident (or with occasions of like nature)

وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۚ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝ (الحشر: ٩)

"(But those who before them had homes in Madinah)... give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls - they are the ones that achieve prosperity." (59:9) (Bukhari, chapter on the greatness of the Companions; Muslim, Kitabul Ashraba)

Providing assistance in the act of feeding:

Reward will be given to the spouse and the servant when they provide assistance in the act of feeding a poor person. According to a report of Hadrat Ayesha (Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

إذا اطعمت المرأة من بيت زوجها غير مفسدة فلها
اجرها وله مثله وللخازن مثل ذلك

Reward will be given to that woman who feeds the poor without upsetting the family budget; likewise the

husband and the household budget - "regulator will stand to gain." (Bukhari and Muslim, Kitabuz Zakath.)

Hadrat Abu Musa A'shari narrates another report pertaining to the person in charge of family accounts. The Prophet said:

الخازن المسلم الذى ينفذ وريما قال يعطى ما امر
به كاملا موفرا طيبة نفسه فيذيعه الى الذى
امر به اخذ المتصدقين

"If a Muslim in charge of family accounts carries out the orders given", (Sometimes the Prophet used to say:) "if he gives what he has been ordered to give, gives in full and gives willingly, to him specifically named by the master, then he will be rewarded in the same way as the donors." (Muslim, Kitabuz Zakath)

Whether it be the wife or the personal assistant or the custodian of the Trust, no one is authorised to appropriate funds without the owner's permission. However, permission may be specific or in accordance with well-known conventions. If a spouse knows within what limits the husband will not object to the charitable acts of helping and feeding the poor, then she can act within those limits. If there is the fear of objection, then she will have to take all precautions.

This is a legalistic advice. Otherwise, the husband ought to be so generous as to feel elated when his wife or trusted servant helps a poor person by giving him his money because by doing so, they have earned him a merit after all.

A companion, popularly known as Abi Laham, (Father of Mutton) says that, on his master's orders, he was

making mutton slices when a poor man approached him and so he gave a few of them to the poor man. When the master came to know of this act of charity, he beat him as a punishment. Abi Laham informed the Prophet who asked the master to explain. The master explained that his servant had done an unauthorised deed. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) pacified and assured the master that they would share the reward between them. (Muslim, Kitabuz Zakath.) That is, the reward would be in proportion to their respective positions. The servant gifted the mutton thinking that the master would not take exception to it and so he would be rewarded; the master would get the reward because the mutton was his property.

Supply of Potable Water

Potable water is indispensable to man. As the blessing of water is there enough and to spare, he has taken it for granted. Only that thirsty man knows the real worth of a few drops of water whose thirst reaches the life-threatening level. That's why, Islam keeps the act of extinguishing the thirst on a par with the act of feeding in terms of merit. A Tradition has this statement:

أَيُّمَا مُسْلِمٍ سَقَى مُسْلِمًا عَلَى ظَمَأٍ سَقَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الرَّحِيقِ
الْمَخْتُومِ

"When a Muslim supplies potable water to a thirsty Muslim, he will be rewarded with a sealed bottle of wine by God on the Day of Judgment." (Abu Dawood, Kitabuz Zakath; Tirmithi, chapters on Qiyamat, 2/28)

According to Hadrat Abu Huraira, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) narrated this

parable: A traveller, passing through a forest, was overwhelmed with thirst. In that condition, he found a well. He climbed down into it and quenched his thirst. When he came out, he saw a thirsty dog. Once again, he got down into the well, collected water in his sock, and climbed out of the well and gave the suffering dog water to drink. Handsome is that handsome does and in appreciation of this endearing gesture, Allah granted the traveller His pardon.

On hearing this parable, the revered Companions wanted to verify if there was any merit in serving the animals. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) replied:

فِي كُلِّ كَبِدٍ رَطْبَةٌ أَجْرٌ

Serving any fresh and functioning liver (i.e. a living object) fetches reward. (Bukhari, chapter on water; Muslim, chapter on killing life)

In another Tradition, containing an anecdote about a prostitute of Bani Israel, it is stated that she secured salvation for performing a similar act. (Muslim, *ibid*)

After giving pieces of advice to a person, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَطِقْ ذَلِكَ فَاطْعِمِ الْجَائِعَ وَاسْقِ الظَّمْآنَ

If you feel that you are not capable of following this advice, then confine yourself to the acts of feeding and supplying water. (Musnad-e-Ahmed, 4/299; Targeeb wa Tarheeb, 3/21)

Lending a hand in a culinary preparation:

The ingredients needed for the preparation of a repast

are flour, rice, pulses, meat, vegetables, salt, water, fuel, etc. One way to serve in this preparation is to supply either food items or fuel. Even this partial service merits reward. In the Traditions, it is stated that there are certain things which should not be denied. One who withholds salt and water suppresses his true identity as a human being. Hadrat Ayesha says, that once she asked the Prophet which thing it was whose denial was not at all permissible. He said there were three things which should not be refused - water, salt and fire. Continuing the conversation, she said that in view of the importance of water, it was understandable why water should not be withheld and she wanted to know why salt and fire should be given when demanded and should not be withheld. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) replied: "O Humaira! (another name for Hadrat Ayesha) He who supplied fire to cook food with has in essence given away the entire food by way of charity; he who supplied salt to make food deliciously edible has in essence given away the entire food by way of charity; he who supplied water to a Muslim in a place where it was not available has in effect given a new lease of life to him." (Ibne Maja, chapters Ar Ragoon; a narrator Ali bin Zaid, considered weak in reliability, is considered 'Sadooq' by Imam Tirmithi, who put some of his reports in the category of 'Hasan' and one report in that of 'Sahih')

Supply of Apparel

The foremost basic need of man is food. Next in importance comes the need to cover the body. This need, like other needs, should be solved on a permanent basis. However, a stop-gap solution has its own value too and

Islam has given it the status of meritorious deed. Many a Tradition has highlighted the merit of giving clothes to a naked person.

Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas narrates a report personally heard. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ما من مسلم كسى مسلماً ثوباً الا كان في حفظ من الله
ما دام عليه منه خرقة

By providing clothes to another Muslim, a Muslim qualifies to get Allah's protection as long as the shreds remain on the donatory. (Mishkatul Masabih, Kitabuz Zakath)

If a person cannot afford to buy new clothes to be given away, he can at least donate used clothes to get a reward from God. Hadrat Umar (Allah be pleased with him) narrates what he personally heard the Prophet saying: when a man wears new clothes, he should say:

الحمد لله الذى كسانى ما اوارى به عورتى و
اتجمل به فى حياتى

"Glory to God in the highest who has clothed me, and these clothes cover my nakedness and adorn me in this life." (Tirmithi Dawaath; Ibne Maja, Kitabul libas)

He should be thankful for new clothes. When they are old, they should be given away in charity. In this way, he can enjoy Allah's protection during life and after death.

Recognising the Right of the Supplicant

It is not that only a poor and deprived person stands in need of emergency and temporary help; even an affluent

person may need such a help. It is because the need arises not so much on account of the economic condition as it does on account of the circumstances in which a person is suddenly caught. A person's pocket is picked on the way and his journey homeward becomes difficult; then it becomes the moral responsibility of another person to help him. Even the richest person may find himself in a helpless situation sometime or other. It is his right to be helped in such a circumstance. This fact is taken into account in a Tradition narrated by Imam Hussain (Allah be pleased with him). The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

للسائل حق وان جاء على فرس

If a man on a horseback comes seeking help, he has the right to be helped. (Abu Dawood, Kitabuz Zakath)

Imam Khattabi explains that this Tradition demands that one should take a charitable view of a person seeking help and not look upon him as a liar and a pretender; in spite of the fact that, to all intents and purposes, he might appear to be better off and even possess a horse to ride on, the possibility still exists that he might indeed be in a tight corner or in the trap of a debt; in such conditions it is permissible for him to accept sadaqa. After enumerating a few more reasons, the Imam concludes that due to such reasons, it is improper to deny help to a seeker, misled by the superficial observation of his apparel and deportment. (Khathabi, Muallim Sunan, 2/76)

Traditions denounce the act of begging and professional beggars on the one hand and, on the other, advise that, if someone is obliged to seek help on account

of some necessity, his need should be fulfilled to the extent possible.

Once Umme Bujaid told the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him): Master! Sometimes a person in need stands before my door and I deeply regret when I have nothing to give him. His advice was; Let no seeker of help be turned away empty handed. If nothing else, at least give him a burnt hoof. (Tirmithi, Abu Dawood, Kitabuz Zakath)

An ideal example of how a seeker of help should be dealt with is found in the following anecdote. One day, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) posed a question: Has anyone fed any poor man today? Hadrat Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) heard this question and went to mosque where he saw a hungry man demanding bread. At the same time Hadrat Abu Bakr saw his own son, Abdur Rahman, eating a piece of bread and he took that piece from his son and gave it to the hungry man. (Abu Dawood, Kitabuz Zakath)

Visiting and Serving the Sick

That person needs emergency aid who has taken seriously ill all of a sudden or has been traumatised in an accident. Any delay in attending to him may aggravate his agony and on certain occasions may endanger his life. The genuine Traditions mention the rights a Muslim has over other Muslims. Among them, there is the right of a sick Muslim that one should visit him and there is the right of a dead person that one should attend his funeral and burial ceremonies. (More details may be found in another work

of mine dealing with Islamic precepts with regard to health and illness.)

In certain circumstances, calling on a sick person and serving him may assume legal significance. One who is prompt in recognising and observing these rights deserves a reward, according to Shariah.

Chapter 9

Hardships and the need for their enduring Solution

How lovely it is and how rewarding to give a few coins when a person seeks monetary help, to enable a hungry person to eat his fill, to provide clothes when a naked person needs them to cover his body! Many of us by God's grace do practise these deeds and earn God's appreciation. But the question remains whether these deeds do cover the concept of social service in its entirety. Let us discuss this question in greater detail.

There is no gainsaying the fact that it is good to give what little help we can to a person in need on a temporary basis. If the need is other than temporary it naturally follows that help should last as long as it is needed. If a person's hardships demand cooperation on a larger scale or on a long - term basis, the assistance should match the nature of demand. When a person is entangled in various kinds of complicated difficulties, his problems will be solved only when the much needed facilities are made available to disentangle himself; the solution needed to his problems must be permanent and not temporary so that the reasons which made him lag behind in the struggle for existence are eliminated. His poverty should not persist and he should cease to be hungry and naked. To make ends meet he should not be obliged to remain dependent at all times on others' generosity and hand-outs.

This vision of a permanent solution can radically transform the concept of social service and widen its agenda. Some examples are given for elucidation.

A comprehensive view of service to the poor and the widows

Providing one meal to a fakir or a poor person is a meritorious deed. The Qur'an and the Traditions have extolled its value and advocated its practice. However, as long as a poor person remains poor, his claim to help will persist and it will be the responsibility of the individual and the state to extricate him from that condition and to eliminate his poverty on a permanent basis in order to enable him to lead a dignified and unperturbed life in society. A Tradition conveyed through Hadrat Abu Huraira deals with the value of such a vision. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

الساعي على الارملة والمسكين كالمُجاهد في سبيل
الله او القائم الليل الصائم النهار

An activist in the cause of widows and economically disadvantaged persons is on a par with a person waging Jihad in Allah's way, or with a person who spends his nights in worship and his days in fasting (in terms of merit.) (Bukhari, Kitabun Nafaqat; Muslim, Kitabuz Zuhd)

The activist's endeavours include all measures for the welfare of the widows and the poor, fulfilment of their needs, securing livelihood for them and ensuring a dignified status in society. Imam Navavi explains that the activist is one who exerts his utmost to improve their

economic condition and to fulfil life's needs. (Explanatory notes on Muslim, 2/411) Hafiz Ibne Hajar explains that the activist is one who exerts himself to the utmost in securing things of utility for the widows and the poor. (Fathul Bari, 9/402)

The poor and the needy are of two varieties. One variety is frank and outspoken about its needs and explicit in its request for help. There is another variety, too sensitive and self-respecting to speak about their plight and seek alms. The society should take the initiative in identifying the people of the second variety and should pay greater attention to the fulfilment of their needs. Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ليس المسكين بهذا الطواف الذي يطوف على الناس

فترده اللقمة واللقمتان والتمر والتمرة و التمرتان قالوا

فمن المسكين يا رسول الله قال: الذي لا يجد غنى

يغنيه ولا يظن له فيتصدق عليه ولا يستل الناس شيئا

"A Miskin (a poor person) is not one who puts his hand forward in the act of begging, who walks around the people and who is quite satisfied if he gets a morsel of food or two dates or one date or half of it."

The listeners requested the Prophet to define 'the Miskin' in positive terms. Then he replied, "A Miskin is one whose possessions do not make him economically independent and whose economic status is not known to people who could help him out with charity and he refrains from begging." (Muslim, Kitabuz Zakath)

The True Import of the Guardianship of an Orphan

The reiterative advice to deal gently with the orphans provides another example from the Qur'an and the Traditions. This gentle dealing may be of a temporary nature but its wider scope warrants that it should be durable in nature so that the orphan is helped to secure economic stability and to become a nobler member of society from the viewpoint of religion and morality. The report of Hadrat Abu Huraira, already mentioned, points to the wider scope. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

كافل اليتيم له او لغيره انا و هو كهاتين فى الجنة و
اشار مالك بالسبابة والوسطى

"The orphan's guardian, whether kinsman or not and I would be adjacent to each other as the two fingers are." Imam Malik, (while narrating this report), demonstrated by holding up his own middle finger and forefinger.

The word 'kafalath' (guardianship) in this Tradition is very significant. Its connotation is inclusive of upbringing, education, training, and financial assistance. Imam Navavi interprets it in these words: The guardian is one who takes care of the food, clothes, education and good manners of the orphan. The honour of proximity to the Prophet will be enjoyed by that guardian who spends his own money to take care of the orphan as well as by that guardian, authorised by the Shariah, who spends the orphan's own money to take care of him. (Sharh Muslim, 2/411)

The honour and reward will be given in proportion to the scale of demands met by the guardian concerned. He

who truly and perfectly discharges his duty as the guardian will be blessed with the Prophet's company in paradise.

Promoting Employment Opportunities

It was the farewell pilgrimage. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) was distributing alms. Two persons appeared before him and requested that they might be given a share in the alms. He saw that they were strong and energetic. In a tone of disapproval he said to them:

ان شئتما اعطيتكما ولا حظ فيها لغنى ولا لقوى
مكتسب

If you so wish, I will give you both a share in the alms.
But may it be known alms are not apportioned among
the rich and to a healthy, energetic and earning
member.

The last part of the above Tradition is quite important and clear. The person who is strong and earning cannot claim a share in Zakath. Imam Khattabi deduces the following rule.

"One point is clear from this Tradition. Without finding out the source in income of a person, we cannot deny him Zakat simply because he appears to be strong and well-built. After all there are people with strong physique and without any vocation and so incapable of self-help. Such a person has a claim to Zakat and it can not be denied to him, according to this Tradition."

That is to say, a man may have health but he is unemployed or he may be employed but with insufficient

income and so he deserves Zakat dole to make ends meet. There are so many youngsters capable of hard work but as they do not have capital, they cannot earn a livelihood and are constrained to lead a hand-to-mouth existence. If the youngsters are helped with capital, they can stand on their own legs and register economic stability. We do not have a viable economic aid programme. It may be more true to say that our minds draw a blank in this regard.

Promoting arts and crafts

A conversation that Abu Tharr had with the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) is as follows. To his question, which deed may be deemed to carry utmost importance, the Prophet replied:

ایمان بالله و جهاد فی سبیلہ، قلت فای الرقاب
افضل قال: اغلاهما ثمنا و انفسها عند اهلها قال فان
لم افعل قال تعین ضائعا او تصنع لا خرق قال فان لم
افعل قال تدع الناس من الشر فانها صدقة تصدق بها
على نفسك

"Belief in Allah and Jihad according to His instructions. I asked him, which category of slave should be freed to secure maximum benefit? He replied: It is that slave whose price is very high and who is clean and decent in his master's eyes. I said, what shall I do if I am not capable of such an act? He replied: Help that inefficient person whose children are being neglected. I told him, what other option is open for me if I cannot take care of him or his children? Then he told me: keep others safe from your mischief; this will be an act of benevolence towards your self."

This Tradition discusses the relative values of faith in God, struggle in God's way, and emancipation of slaves. The need to help an inefficient person deserves some elaboration. The Prophet wants that a person who is groaning in poverty and is unable to look after his wife and children should be helped and should not be allowed to go to seed. The quantum of the nature of help is not prescribed but left to the helper's discretion in the light of the circumstances of the person in need. The helper should extend that type of help which the suffering person needs and that help should be in keeping with his own status and resources.

In another Tradition, Abu Tharr is asked to help not a poor person but a person with a vocation (Navavi, *Sharh Muslim*, 1/62; Ibn Hajar, *Fathul Bari*, 5/90) The help that such a person needs will be in the form of financial aid, technical know-how, tools and machines, marketing strategy for the products. A person with a vocation is specially mentioned because people are not aware of the problems he faces and consequently he is not generally considered for help.

Another person that Abu Tharr is asked to help is a person who is without any craftsmanship and inept and inefficient. (Hafiz ibne Hajr explains that Akhraq stands for one who is unskilled and whose performance is not up to the mark. (*Fathul Bari* 5/90). Allama Ibne Atheer describes that Akhraq is a person quite divested of the essential knowledge and is devoid of any skill that may enable him to earn his livelihood. (*An nihaya* 1/298) That is, order is given first to help a skilled craftsman and then need to help one who is without special skills is emphasized. The aim is to make people alive to their duty

of helping a person either without a vocation or without a skill. If the whole society becomes aware of this duty, and the institutes to promote arts and crafts begin to function, and unskilled labourers are trained to improve their professional skills and employment opportunities are provided to them, then this will be a practical way of rendering social service and this would provide considerable help in solving the economic problems of the disadvantaged sections.

Chapter 10:

Some Well-Defined Dimensions of Service

The Qur'an and Hadith have drawn attention towards the emergency and immediate help and towards the permanent solution of the problems and difficulties that man faces, and have simultaneously dealt with what constitutes well-defined areas of service. They have a bearing upon the task of social amelioration and their impact from the perspective of economics is long lasting. In their light and under other conditions and circumstances, other dimensions may be conjured up.

Rendering Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is one version of service. There is no doubt about its importance. The Qur'an has laid great emphasis on the rights of the relatives and on the monetary assistance to the vulnerable, the disadvantaged and the deprived. For example,

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوا وَجُوهَكُمْ قَبْلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ
وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا
وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَٰئِكَ

الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (البقرة: ١٧٧)

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards east or west; but it is righteousness - to believe in Allah and the Last Day and the angels, and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the welfare, for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves, to be steadfast in prayer; and practise regular charity, to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing." (2:177).

This verse finds fault with the formal religiosity of the people of the Book and explains what genuine religiosity comprises. The crucial word in the passage is 'Birr'. It connotes "Meeting obligations." There are obligations towards Allah and obligations towards fellow beings. Values like empathy, sympathy and magnanimity are enshrined in these obligations. As such, this crucial word encompasses all the connotative nuances of benevolence. Viewed thus, Birr (as in "Al-Barru") is an attributive name of God.*

The Qur'an teaches that man has to observe the rights of the Creator and those of the fellow creatures. Man can attain the pinnacle of piety and benevolence only when his heart is aglow with the light of faith and when his hard-earned money is spent on kith and kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarers, the beggars, the subordinates,

*Allama Hameeduddeen Farahi (Rah.) says: Righteousness is allegiance to Truth and it encompasses the main Rights, viz., obedience to God, obedience to parents, sympathy towards mankind, and viewed from this angle, it stands for magnanimity (Ihsan) and includes all good things and thus it becomes an attribute of the Exalted Lord.) (Mufradatul Qur'an, p.264)

the slaves and other vulnerable individuals and groups. To drive home this truth, Prayers and Zakat are mentioned, one is a well-defined relationship with God and the other is a clear-cut assistance to humanity. It is made clear in certain other verses that man's personal wealth is not his alone and that the weaker sections and the poor have a claim over it. It is imperative that he should settle that claim.

وَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرْ
تَبْذِيرًا ۝ إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۖ وَكَانَ
الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ۝

(بنی اسرائیل: ۲۷، ۲۸)

"And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want and to the wayfarer: but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift.

Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful."
(17:26, 27).

After pointing out that others have a claim over man's wealth, this verse prohibits wasteful and unproductive expenditure. The reason is that one who is addicted to such expenditure becomes oblivious of the rights of others.

أَوْ لَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۖ إِنَّ
فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ قَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَ
الْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ
اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝

(الروم: ۳۷، ۳۸)

The truth of this verse is reiterated in another context. "See they not that Allah enlarges the provision

and restricts it, to whomsoever He pleases? Verily in that are signs for those who believe.

So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer. That is best for those, who seek the countenance of Allah and it is they who will prosper." (30:37, 38).

The chapters 17 and 30 were revealed in Mecca. The verses quoted refer to the rights of the kindred, the needy and the wayfarer even though Zakath was not made obligatory in Mecca. Imam Razi comments on 30:37, 38 that these verses mention those people with whom decent behaviour is a must. Zakath is levied only on the savings which have remained unused for one year whereas this condition is not prescribed here. Man is bound to extend decent behaviour to those who have a right to it as the subject matter of these verses is affection towards the public (and not zakath). The kindred, the needy and the wayfarer constitute three categories with whom it is necessary to deal gently, whether the person magnanimous towards them has surplus money or not. (Tafseer-e-Kabeer, vol.13, part 25, p.109).

A point worth considering is that an impression is created in these verses that by spending money on the vulnerable individuals one does no favour to them but merely transfers to them what is their legitimate right. It is this impression that prevents the capitalist from exploiting the weak. If the capitalist had become aware that others have a share in what he possesses and it is incumbent on him to release that share, then the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat now rampant would never have begun.

Providing assistance through loan

Sometimes man needs financial assistance in order to offset his economic deficit or to meet an unforeseen economic problem. If this assistance is not immediately available, his situation may go from bad to worse and his difficulties may increase. One way to help him out is to advance a loan to him to enable him to fulfil his need and then he is expected to return the debt to the creditor. Traditions promise great merit and reward for this act of helping a needy person. Hadrat Abdullah ibne Masood narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ما من مسلم يقرض مسلماً قرضاً مرتين الا كان
كصدقتها مرة

When a Muslim advances a loan two times to another Muslim, it is as if he has given sadaqa once. (Ibne Maja, chapters on charity, chapter on loan. Dar Qutni says it is the Companion's observation, vide Neelul Avatar 5/347)

Imam Shoukani states that there are Traditions on the great merits of lending loans. General statements in the Qur'an and the Traditions support his observation. In them there is a clear reference to fulfil the needs of the Muslims, to assist them, to remove their difficulties, to eliminate their hunger and poverty. Lending a loan to them is also mentioned. There is no difference of opinion among Muslims with regard to the permissibility of giving loans. Ibn Ruslan says, "It is not a moot point whether a Muslim can ask for a loan when he needs it and it is not infra dig for him to do so. If seeking a loan is an undignified act, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace

be with him) would not have asked for a loan." (Neelul Avtar 5/347).

Loans are very important in commerce as they play a role in starting a business and maintaining it and compensating the losses which occur every now and then. They are integral to the present day commerce. The state of affairs is such that, if the credit system is withdrawn, big businesses will crash. The credit system is looked upon as the best source of generating profit by man with a materialistic bent of mind. However, nobody is prepared to lend without interest and everybody wants the rate of interest to be kept as benefit from the loan, the creditor is justified in claiming a share in that profit. It will not be in the fitness of things if the debtor should take all the profit himself from the credit advanced and the creditor should be ignored.

The second reason given is that a worldwide general trend is the devaluation of the currency. The purchasing power of one hundred rupees will be reduced to that of eighty or ninety rupees by year-end. If a loan of one hundred rupees is returned after a year, the quantum will be the same but its purchasing power will be less by ten or twenty rupees. The creditor thus stands to lose. Such arrangements are advanced to justify the role of interest in monetary transactions.

This bent of mind goes against the grain of Islam, which does not look upon the lending of a loan as an act of profiteering but rather as a moral gesture of doing a good turn that a man in trouble deserves. Islam expects that the creditor, instead of collecting compound interest to safeguard and protect his capital in the light of

devaluation, should extend all possible concession. If the debtor needs an extension of time for repayment, it should be given; and, in case his financial constraints do not enable him to repay the loan, the creditor should be kind enough to write off the loan. While proclaiming the non-admissibility of interest, the Qur'an upholds an ideal moral conduct with regard to the repayment of loan:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ وَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ۚ وَإِن كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ ۚ وَأَن تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ۚ

(البقرة: ۲۷۸-۲۸۱)

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers. If ye do it not, take notice of war from Allah and his Messenger: but if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums; deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly. If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay. But if you remit it by way of charity that is best for you if ye only knew. And fear the Day, when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly."

(2:278-281).

The Traditions advise the debtor to repay the loan in the best manner possible on the one hand and on the other advise the creditor to follow a soft policy towards the debtor.

Hadrat Abu Huraira narrates that Allah's Messenger (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) borrowed a camel from a person (a Jew or a Bedouin) who demanded its return most harshly. The Companions wanted to be harsh towards him but the Prophet intervened saying, "Let it be; he has a right to be harsh because what he is demanding belongs to him." The Prophet advised his followers to buy a camel and give it to him. They replied that there was no other camel of the age similar to that of the borrowed camel but a better camel was available. The Prophet advised them to buy the better camel and give it to him, because

فَأَنْ خَيْرَ كُمْ أَحْسَنُكُمْ قَضَاءً

"superior is the person who repays in a better manner what he has borrowed." (Bukhari, Kitabfil istiqrad; Muslim, Kitabul musaqat).

The honour that awaits a creditor for dealing gently with the debtor is described by the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) in these words:

مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مَعْسُراً أَوْ وَضَعَ عَنْهُ أَظْلَهُ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ

Allah will give shelter to him who gave respite to the debtor or who waived the load. (Muslim, Kitabuz zuhd).

Hadrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet said,

مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مَعْسُراً أَوْ وَضَعَ لَهُ أَظْلَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَحْتَ

ظِلِّ الْعَرْشِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ

"On the Day of Judgement Allah will accommodate that person, who allowed the debtor a longer time to repay the loan or even waived it off, in the shade of His Majestic Throne which will be the only available shade on that Day. (Tirmithi, Chapters on Al-buyoo').

According to Hadith, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said, that there was a very rich man who used to give loans to people and had instructed his loan recovery agents that in the matter of repayment they should allow the debtors in straitened circumstances enough time to repay with ease and , as regards the well-to-do debtors, his staff was asked to ignore any reduction in the quantum of loan payment, Allah admitted that rich man to heaven as a reward for this good act." (Bukhari, Kitabul Buyoo, Muslim, Kitabul Musaqat).

One day, a debtor pleaded for some concession but the creditor refused to oblige. As a consequence, there was a heated exchange. The creditor swore that he would offer no concession. The Prophet came out of his chamber and asked , 'Who has sworn not to do a good thing?' The creditor acknowledged that it was he who swore like that and (he regretted it) and allowed the debtor to act according to his choice and convenience. (Bukhari, Kitabus sulh; Muslim, *ibid.*).

Ibne Abi Hadrad took a loan from Hadrat Ka'ab bin Malik who demanded the repayment of the loan but the debtor was not in a position to repay. When the matter came to a head, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) attracted the attention of Hadrat Ka'ab and gestured to him to take half and write off the other half. The Companion followed the Prophet's advice.(*ibid.*)

As there are different regulations and problems pertaining to unrecoverable loans and bankruptcy, they are not discussed here. The point most relevant here is that giving a loan to the needy is to offer assistance to him. To seek compensation for this assistance bespeaks

usury-driven mindset. Islam is opposed to it. Good conduct and genuine service, which Islam extols, consists in the following: treating the debtor with affection, love and gentleness, avoiding the exploitation of his weakness, making concession for his helplessness, and providing him with all possible facilities.

To make a gift of an essential thing

If a thing which a person needs is given away to him, it will be one way of expressing solidarity with him. This act of giving is 'hibbah' (The word is formed from the letters w-h-b, according to Ibn Manzoor). According to the Arabic lexicon, hibbah is that gift given without an expectation of some return or fulfillment of a purpose. In jurisprudence, hibbah is to make someone an owner of a thing without getting a compensation for it, (Nasafi, Kunzuddaqaiq, p.308).

There should be no axe to grind when a gift is given and it should not be in exchange for anything else. Hibbah should be offered to please God alone. Traditions do not permit anyone to buy what he has given as hibbah by paying a price for it. Hadrat Umar says, "I gifted a horse of good breed to a man who had enlisted himself for jihad but that man was financially weak and could not take proper care of the animal. Consequently the horse's condition began to deteriorate. It occurred to me that he might be willing to sell the horse. So I raised this topic with Allah's Messenger. He advised me,

لا تشتره و ان اعطاكه بدرهم واحد فان العائد في
صدفته كالكلب يعود في قيئه

"Do not buy it, even if he is willing to sell it for a song because the man who buys back what he has freely gifted away is like a dog which laps up its own vomit."

(Bukhari, Kitabul Hibbah; Muslim, Kitabul Hibbaath)

It is reflective of a small mind when a person takes back what he has gifted away. By this behaviour are injured those pure feelings of sympathy and affection which had emerged at the time of giving. Moreover, love for possessions and wealth gets highly intensified. When a man takes back what he has given voluntarily, he might be regretting his act of charity or he intends to deprive his beneficiary of his gain. The self-respect of the beneficiary would not be hurt so much when love and affection are not shown as it would be when love and affection are shown and then withdrawn. To buy back what has been gifted is not permitted because of the possibility that the buyer may take undue advantage of his former act of gifting and the beneficiary may find himself in a condition, not of his choice, when he is obliged to sell with reduced profit. **

Lending things free for a fixed period

One can offer cooperation and service by lending things free for a fixed period and the beneficiary will have to use them and return them when the period is over. Traditions describe such an act of as a gift and a sadaqa.

** According to Hanafi School of jurisprudence, if some prohibitory factors are not there, the man who unselfishly gifts a thing reserves the right to take it back but this right is severely repulsive (Makrooh-e-Tahreemi). Vide Durrul Mukhtar with Raddul Mukhtar, 4/709 and further. According to Imam Shafi'i, Imam Malik, and Imam Auzaee, this Tradition deals with the free gift offered to a stranger. If the gift is given to one's progeny, it can be taken back. (Nawawi, Sharh Muslim, 2/36) Books on jurisprudence contain details.

Hadrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

نعم الصدقة اللقحة الصفى منحة الشاة الصفى منحة
تغدو باناء وتروح باخر

"The best sadaqa is to gift (for a few days) camel in the advanced stage of pregnancy or a good goat which yields a vessel full of milk both morning and evening." (Bukhari, Kitabul Asraba)

The words in Muslim, Kitabuz Zakath are as follows:

الا رجل يمتح اهل بيت ناقة تغدو بعس و تروح
بعس ان اجرها لعظيم.

"Great is the reward to that person who lends to another person a she-camel which yields milk so plentifully as to fill a big vessel both morning and evening."

Hadrat Bara bin Azib narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

من منح منيحة لبن او ورق او هدى زقاقاً كان
له مثل عتق رقبة

"The reward for lending a milch animal or silver (money as loan) for a few days or showing the way will be equal to that of freeing a slave." (Tirmithi, chapters on Birr) Imam Tirmithi explains that 'silver' in the Tradition stands for loan.

"Hudan Zaqqa" may be translated as 'he shows the way' translation is closer to the words in the text. (Ibne Manzoor-Z, Q, Q are the source of Zuquq) Others read the word as "huddan Zaqqa." Zuqaq means a narrow lane or a row of trees. (Ibne Athear) The meaning then will be

that it refers to the merit of a person who has donated a row of trees in his garden to someone.

A few points, culled from these Traditions, are important and worthy of consideration. One, money given as a loan or a milch animal given for temporary benefit is defined as a sadaqa or a maniha (gift). Though what are offered ultimately return to the owner, these things lend help to the user at a time when he needs them. To that extent they are a sadaqa or a benefaction. What gives temporary relief at times assumes importance and it is this importance which is made explicit here.

Two, though this Tradition explains that reward will be given to a person who lends his milch animal so that a poor person may benefit by its milk, the word 'Manaha' is used for the purpose. This word has a wider connotation. It permits the user to derive benefit from the animal's wool, manure and its young one. (vide, Ferozeabadi, Qamoos, etymology - M,N,H, p.268; Ibne Atheer, 4/110)

Offering a pair of each thing

Traditions extol the value of donating things in twos in the way of Allah's. Hadrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

من انفق زوجين في سبيل الله نودى من ابواب الجنة يا
عبد الله هذا خير

- A voice will emerge from the gates of Heaven, O Slave of God, this is a righteous deed, addressed to that person who donates in Allah's ways two things of the same category.

In a Tradition narrated by Hadrat Abu Tharr, more

details are available. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) is reported to have said:

ما من عبد مسلم يتفق من كل مال له زوجين في سبيل
الله الاستقبلته حجة الجنة كلهم يدعوه الى ما عنده،
قلت و كيف ذالك قال ان كانت ابلا فبعيرين و ان
كانت بقرة فبقرتين

If a Muslim donates a pair of things from each of his possessions in Allah's way, he will be received with open arms on all sides by the guards of paradise on the Day of Judgment. Every one of the guards will have some special gifts towards which they would invite him. I (Hadrat Abu Tharr) asked the Prophet what he meant by pair donation. He replied, if there are camels, donate two camels; if there are two cows, give a pair of them.

One aspect of these Traditions is that they extol the value of philanthropy and motivates a man of riches to spend to the maximum extent in Allah's way.

Another aspect is that the needs of the socially marginalised people are brought into focus and the social elite are asked to fulfil those needs. Sometimes the needs are such that to fulfil them two things of the same category are required. For example, ploughing, irrigation, cargo-laden vehicles require a pair of bullocks or buffaloes. It is also possible that to maintain family budget one milch cow or buffalo may not be sufficient. Reward will be in proportion to the quantum of the need met. Reward for donating two cows in Allah's way is mentioned in the Traditions. An example is needed to make the point clear. The meaning of 'a pair' is extensive. A pair of things belonging to one category may include

money, clothes and other paraphernalia. Agricultural tool and machinery are not excluded.

People understand that 'Allah's way' is a stock phrase for Jihad as Qazi Ayaz has pointed out. But it is more true to say that it is an umbrella word covering all activities pertaining to righteousness and ideal behaviour. (Nawawi, Sharh Muslim 1/330i, Hafiz Ibn Hajr has explained several aspects of 'Allah's way'. Fathul Bari, 7/19)

Partnership in Business

Capital and labour are required in every business. Sometimes capital may be available but man may not be in a position to contribute the nature of labour required. Sometimes he is capable of labour but the required capital may not be available. To combine the two elements required, one way will be for the capitalist to contribute the capital and for the labourer to contribute his labour and both may share the profit. This is known as Mudaribah in Shariah. Allamah ibne Atheer says,

"Mudaribat" is to contribute capital to a person to enable him to run a business and on condition that he will have a fixed share in it." (An Nihaya, 3/14)

According to 'Hidaya', on the basis of capital from one side and labour from another, partnership in gain is described as Mudaribat. It has always been necessary and permissible in the eyes of Shariah as there are two types of people. "Some people have capital but do not know how to invest it. Some people are skilled in entrepreneurship but divested of capital. This situation leads to Mudaribat in order that the needs of the investment - savvy and investment - non savvy, and of the

entrepreneurs without capital and of the capitalists are fully met. This practice was in vogue at the advent of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) who did not interfere with it and the Companions continued the practice. (Hidaya, 3/255)

Hadrat Abdullah bin Hisham's narration provides a proof of the Companions' practice. He narrates that when he was a child, his mother took him into the presence of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) who lovingly patted his head and prayed for abundance in his life. The child grew up to be a successful businessman and his success was the result of the Prophet's prayer. His grandson, Zehra bin Mabad, used to accompany him and he used to buy cereals. Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar and Hadrat Abdullah bin Zubair (Allah be pleased with them all) used to meet him and request him to take them as his partners. Sometimes he used to earn a camel - load of profit which he sent home. (Bukhari, Chapter on partnership)

Allama Abdul Qasim Kharqi says that business partnership has been approved of by the Scripture, sunnah, and consensus. While interpreting this observation, Allama ibn Qudama Hambali writes that there is unanimity of the Muslims on the issue of business partnership and, if there is any controversy, it is on the question of some of its varieties. (Al-Moghni, 5/3)

There can be partnership in both capital and labour and both types are important. The present-day business transaction has become so sophisticated that a man cannot launch a big business by means of limited resources. Those interested have to come together and

pool their resources and establish companies and through the companies only huge business turnover is possible. People investing capital in them are treated as partners and shareholders. Social service can be realized through the establishment of such companies which become a springboard of progress for men of limited resources, who can become partners in them.

Professional expertise and industrial knowhow have assumed extraordinary importance in modern times. No manufacturing unit and no factory can be run without this specialized management skill. Big industrial houses need experts and specialists of different types. Without capital, these experts are unable to forge ahead in the industrial area. One way to help them is for the capitalists to offer partnership to them and secure their cooperation on that basis. But the mindset of a capitalist today is such that it can hire an employee but cannot offer partnership in business.

Agricultural Partnership

Partnership in agriculture and farming is possible. In modern times, huge landholdings have come into existence, methods of farming have undergone a change, and the machines and tools are being used in a massive way. These have increased the value of partnership in agriculture. Cooperative farming was there, according to the Traditions. One type of such farming consisted of a landlord and a labourer who did the farming. If there is a garden, its maintenance will be in the hands of a caretaker and the profit accruing from the garden will be shared between the owner and the caretaker according to the

terms of the agreement between them.

Hadrat Abu Huraira says that the Helpers of Madina (Ansar) requested the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) that he should distribute the date orchards between them and the new comers from Mecca. The Prophet refused to comply with the request. A second suggestion was placed for consideration and it was this that the Meccan Muslims should look after the orchards and irrigate them and the harvest would be divided between the owners and the refugees. The suggestion was accepted. (Bukhari, Chapter on agriculture)

Hadrat Abu Jafar Baqar says that the emigrants to Madina did the farming on the wages of one-third or one-fourth of the harvest as the case might be. (Among the Companions) Hadrat Ali, Sa'ad, Abdullah ibne Masood, and (among their disciples) Uman bin Abdul Azeez, Qasim bin Muhammad, Urwah bin Zubair worked on that basis and so did the families of Hadrat Abu Bakr, Umar, Ali, and Ibne Seereen.

Abdur Rahman bin Aswad claimed that he was an agricultural partner with Abdur Rahman bin Yazid. Hadrat Umar lent his gardens and fields on condition that if he supplied seeds etc, he would claim one-half of the entire produce and that if the farmer used his own agricultural implements, plough, seeds, etc, he could claim two thirds of the produce leaving one-third to Hadrat Umar.

Hadrat Hasan Basri was of the opinion that there was no harm if the landowner and the farmer could spend jointly and share the income according to the conditions commonly agreed upon earlier. Imam Zahri holds the

same view.

Hadrat Hasan Basri says that a cotton plucker may lay claim to, for example, half of the cotton plucked. Ibne Seereen; Ata, Hakam, Zahri, Qatada are unanimous in saying that it is not objectionable if the weaver is supplied with thread on the condition that he would get one-third or one-fourth of the finished product.

Muammar says that animals can be given in custody on condition that the owner would have a right to one-third or one-fourth of the income. (Bukhari, Chapter on agriculture. For details, Fathul Barri, 5/977. Imam Abu Haneefa does not approve of partnership in land matters but his disciples (Imam Yusuf and Imam Muhammad) approve of it and Hanafi jurisprudence agrees with them. Hidayat, 3/422-423. Other Imams approve of it with some reservation here and there).

These details indicate how Islam promoted conditions by which all could derive equal benefit from resources, skill and competence. The fault with us is that the resources we have are not put to good use and our skills remain frozen and untapped. Where these resources and skills are exploited beneficially, hurdles in economic progress get eliminated and the society registers unhindered prosperity.

Consultancy Services

Man is in dire need of good advice at every step. Whether it be education, arts and crafts, trade, agriculture, travel or health care, practically in every walk of life, man needs consultancy services. Modern laws and regulations have made matters so complicated that man

cannot claim adequate understanding of their diverse aspects. At times absence of sound advice lands one in great troubles and causes one severe losses. It is for this reason prestigious institutions have been established to offer solutions to various problems. Traditions have extolled the value of tendering prompt and sane advice. One hadith states:

من دل على خير فله نصف اجر فاعله

"He who guides another to a benevolent deed will secure half the reward of what the other person gets by performing it." (Muslim, Kitabul Amarat)

In the same vein, giving wrong advice knowingly, deliberately, wantonly is described as a betrayal of trust. Hadrat Abu Huraira says, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

من افشى بغير علم كان اثمه على من افشاه و من اشار على اخيه بامر يعلم ان الرشده في غيره فقد خان

If a man is given ill-informed advice (and he acts on it), the advisor will bear the responsibility of sin; if a person knows wherein the welfare of the seeker of advice lies and yet puts him on the wrong track, he is guilty of betraying the trust reposed in him." (Abu Dawood, Kitabul Ibn)

The problems created by modern culture and civilization are highly complicated. To make matters worse, there are no institutions to guide people aright in these problems, to devise strategies to avail themselves of the state - of - the - art resources and gadgetry, and to expound Islamic perspectives on these issues.

Succour to the Victim

Social service is inclusive of the help rendered to the persecuted individuals and communities. Islam is opposed to all forms of persecution. On the one hand Islam strictly prohibits all acts of injustice and, on the other, instructs not to endure silently any excesses in society but to raise a hue and cry against the oppressor and to restrain him from doing injustice and to shield the victim from the oppressor's atrocities and offer succour to the victim in every possible way. (For more details, a treatise on "Islam protects the weak from oppression," in Tahqeeqate Islami, Aligarh, Vol II No.2 April-June 1983)

Hadrat Bara bin Azib says that the Prophet ordered them to do seven things and one of them was to offer succour to the victim. (Bukhari, Kitabul Adab; Muslim, Kitabul Libas)

Imam Navavi looks upon the act of helping a victim as a mandatory duty to be discharged at least by a few and as a part of the campaign for the promotion of the good and the elimination of the evil. (Sharh Muslim, 2/188. Details regarding the help to the victim, when it is compulsory, when it is not, when it is permissible, and how and when it should be rendered are discussed in Fathul Bari: 5/61) It is thus made clear that people who are close to the scene of atrocity should rise to help a person whose life and property are threatened, whose status and respect are in danger, whose house is being looted and whose property is subjected to incineration. If the victim secures satisfactory cooperation of some altruistic souls, others are absolved of their duty. If no help is extended by anyone, all the people living close by will be held guilty of negligence.

There are different ways to help the victim - legal and moral. Improving his economic condition is another way. Psychological help is to assure him that he will not be left in the lurch to fend for himself. Any injustice meted out to him will be resisted; solidarity with him will be upheld in difficulties. Where grim determination and iron resolve is there to help and save a victim, such a society will be definitely free from barbarity and brutality and in such a society even the most vulnerable individual will not be obliged to lead a pitiable existence.

Chapter 11

Welfare Schemes

There are several necessities for whose fulfilment an individual is dependent upon others. Many individuals may have to deal with such necessities too. Welfare schemes aim at fulfilling the necessities of all. There are two types of schemes. One scheme fulfils the needs of the public and its utility directly covers the total population or a very large part of it. Another scheme addresses very special or technical needs but the whole society stands to gain. Islam wants its followers to pay attention to both schemes.

Both individuals and institutions are involved in welfare schemes. Many schemes are included among the responsibilities of the welfare state, which allocates a part of its budget to them. How to distinguish between the welfare schemes and the welfare state responsibilities? Where do the respective spheres begin and end? No detailed answers are required here! It is obvious that the size of the spheres will be determined by the available resources. These spheres may and do overlap, leading hopefully to better and more profitable results.

The target addressee for Islam is the individual because the initiative rests with him whether he is a part of an institution or of the state. He determines their identity and ethos. In this area too, Islam addresses the individual first.

Sanitation and Garbage Clearance

One welfare scheme is to educate the public about the value of hygiene, and about the health hazards inherent in keeping the streets untidy and unclean people should be taught not to tolerate filth and impurities. There should be regular garbage clearance whether the people's colonies are big or small. Problems relating to it should be solved and every effort should be made to ensure that people are not compelled to live in unsanitary conditions. There is a general impression that preoccupation with sanitation is of western origin even though Islam's role in this matter is exemplary. Love for cleanliness and abhorrence of filth are deliberately cultivated through instruction, training, persuasion and motivation. Islam offers an ideal concept of how to keep things spick and span and mobilizes the society for it. (My book in Urdu "Islamic teachings on health and disease" may be read for further details.)

Removal of Roadblocks

Transporting man and materials from one place to another is a key factor in the economic boom of a country. Roads must be well-laid, clean and safe for travel, difficulties during a journey must be reduced to a minimum and, there should be facilities galore; in such a country the rate of economic growth will be proportionately high. For this purpose, infrastructure like roads and bridges is developed; highways are made safe; distance and route indicators are erected; traffic regulations are promulgated; speed limits and accident prone areas are pointed out to reduce the possibilities of accidents; bus shelters and creature comforts are

provided to the travellers. Air travel is growing in popularity and has brought in its wake peculiar problems which are being continuously addressed.

It is the state responsibility to maintain national highways and solve their problems and provide transport facilities. Every welfare state owns this responsibility. However, the participation of individuals in this venture is not entirely ruled out. This becomes easy when they are socially aware, educationally trained, religiously God-fearing, and endowed with fellow-feeling and goodwill. Otherwise, a thousand devices to keep travel safe go in vain; at every step new hurdles and hindrances may crop up; sometimes, a traveller may face even very grave situations. These are not unfounded fears but everyday occurrences.

Even though Islam recognizes that this welfare scheme is indeed the state responsibility, it has assigned a participatory role to the individual too and highlighted it. One of the clearly spelt out services that he has to discharge is to keep the streets clean and smooth for the vehicular movement. Some relevant passages are presented. Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

الايمان بضع وسبعون او بضع وستون شعبة فافضلها قول لا

اله الا الله و ادناها اماطة الاذى عن الطريق والحياء شعبة

من الایمان

Faith (Iman) comprises more than seventy or more than sixty sections; the best section is the holy proposition that there is no other Deity than Allah; and the lowest section of faith is to remove harmful objects from the path. Haya (insurmountable

reluctance to commit evil) is but an offshoot of faith." (Sahih Muslim, Kitabul Iman) Bukhari's narration is quite unambiguous about the number of sections (sixty). See his chapter on Iman. Another report of Muslim is in favour of more than seventy sections. Abu Dawood and Tirmithi support this report. Some experts on Hadith literature opt for Bukhari's report because the number sixty is included in all narrations. Other experts prefer the report of seventy sections and above because the narrators are noted for their reliability and so highly acceptable. Vide Navavi, Sharh Muslim, 1/47. Ibne Hajar tried to collect all the sixty or seventy sections. (Fathul Bari, 1/40, 41)

The objective of these Traditions seems to inform people that religion per se can be categorized under sixty or seventy sections. A hierarchy of sections is hinted at. Imam Baihaqi's work 'Shobul Iman' is a most comprehensive work on the subject.

Belief in God awakens in man a desire to provide comfort to all those who have been created by God and this desire grows from strength to strength. If faith is internalised in the true sense, then man will strain every nerve to become a source of maximum benefit to others. A very small aspect of this endeavour, as Hadith points out, is that a man of faith will not tolerate that the passers-by should put up with the presence of stones, thorns, garbage, and unclean things on the road and will hasten to remove them for the benefit of the passers-by.

Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

لقد رأيت رجلا يتقلب في الجنة في شجرة قطعها من
ظهر الطريق كانت تؤذي الناس

"I saw a man walking in paradise. (His commendable act was that) he cut down a tree which caused

hardships to the people moving on the road." (Muslim; Kitabul Birr)

For removing a public nuisance, the way to heaven was made easy for him and it became possible for him to walk leisurely in the celestial meadows.

Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said"

بينما رجل يمشى بطريق وجد غصن شوك على الطريق فأخذه فشكر الله فغفر له

"A thorny twig was lying on the way. A passer-by saw it and threw it away. Allah appreciated his act and blessed him with forgiveness." (Bukhari, Kitabul Mazalim; Muslim, ibid.)

The words of another narration are as follows:

مرَّ رجل بغصن شجرة على ظهر الطريق فقال والله لا
أُحِينُ هذا عن المسلمين لا يؤذيهم فادخل الجنة

In the middle of the road there lay a large branch of a tree. A passer-by saw it and said to himself, "By God, I will not allow this branch to obstruct the passage of the Muslims." As a consequence, Allah admitted him to paradise." (Muslim, ibid.)

Of the last two Traditions, the former explains that the man who cut the tree which was a hindrance to the movement of the people became qualified to enter heaven and the latter explains that the mere act of removing a branch which lay across the road brought the person glad tidings. From this one can conclude that by removing a very small inconvenience and by bringing a very small relief to the people, man can merit a perennial blessing like paradise.

Hadrat Abu Barza Aslami requested the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him):

عَلِّمْنِي شَيْئًا أَنْتَفَعُ بِهِ

Please teach me something that I can benefit from.

The Prophet's advice was:

اعْزِلِ الْاِذَى عَنْ طَرِيقِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Keep the pathways of the Muslims free from troublesome things. (Muslim, ibid.)

Though these Traditions discuss the merit of removing things which hurt from the roads, Imam Navavi is right when he explains that these Traditions uphold the merit of every act that benefits Muslims and keeps them safe from harm and loss".(Sharh Muslim, ibid.)

It has to be borne in mind that these instructions are given in the context of the Muslim society and so the emphasis is on protecting the Muslim interests. Otherwise the instructions have a wider import and include the interests of all. Any act that brings safety to the pathways through which people pass is indeed meritorious. Some Traditions which talk of the Muslims talk of An-Nas, people too. The Tradition of Abu Barza Aslami has another version in which, instead of Muslims, there is the phrase "the pathways of the people." (Al-Adab al Mufrad, 1/324).

Hadrat Abu Huraira quotes the Prophet's statement,

يُمِيطُ الْاِذَى عَنْ الطَّرِيقِ صَدَقَةٌ

"It is sadaqa if a man removes from the road anything that may cause harm." (Bukhari, Kitabul Mazalim; Muslim, Kitabuz Zakat)

This Tradition throws light on the reason for the grant of merit to a person who removes harmful objects from the pathway. The purpose of sadaqa is to help a person in his difficulty and bring relief to him. The removal of harmful object from the way serves the same purpose; the wayfarer should face no difficulty and he should pass along the way in comparative safety and with ease. Viewed thus, it becomes an act of sadaqa. (Fathul Bari, 5/70)

The problems and the obstacles which one faces on the way may have a bewildering variety. It is a religious duty to eliminate them and make the journey safe. On discharging this duty a Muslim can look forward to an excellent reward.

Construction of inns and hotels

Another service of the same kind is the construction of inns and hotels, wherein home comforts are available and the distance from the native place does not pose hardships for the travellers. A Tradition narrated by Hadrat Abu Huraira highlights the reward which this service fetches. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

إِنَّ مِمَّا يَلْحَقُ الْمُؤْمِنَ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ وَحَسَنَاتِهِ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهِ عِلْمًا
عَلَّمَهُ وَنَشْرَهُ وَوَلَدًا صَالِحًا تَرَكَهُ أَوْ مَصْحَفًا وَرَّثَهُ أَوْ
مَسْجِدًا بَنَاهُ أَوْ بَيْتًا لِبْنِ السَّبِيلِ أَوْ نَهْرًا أَجْرَاهُ أَوْ صَدَقَةً
أَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ مَالِهِ فِي صَحْتِهِ وَحَيَاتِهِ يَلْحَقُهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهِ

Among the deeds and the righteous services which fetch blessings even after one's death are: Dissemination of knowledge; good children (in whose upbringing he has played his role); the scripture

whose custody he has handed over to someone; a mosque he had constructed; a shelter he had constructed for the travellers; a canal he had dug; alms given in a state of health. These acts will be a perennial source of rewards for a person even after his death. (Ibne Maja; Targeeb wa Tarheeb, 1/68)

This Tradition mentions some special welfare schemes and they are described as Sadaqas whose rewards are perennial and cumulative. One of the schemes is the construction of inns and hotels. Investment in such schemes, according to a hadith, is a wise act of sadaqa.

Hadrat Abu Omana narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

افضل الصدقات ظل فسطاط في سبيل الله

"The best sadaqa is to provide shelter through a tent in Allah's way." (Tirmithi, Merits of Jihad; Musnad-e-Ahmad, 5/270).

Though this Tradition discusses the reward of erecting tents and shelters for the warriors participating in Jihad, it may have a wider application to include the establishment of shelters and centres for religious education and training, dawah and preaching, hajj and umrah.

Board for Water Distribution

Water sustains life and in this era of urban and technological development, the distribution of pure and potable water in accordance with the needs of the growing population poses a huge problem. Islam has been alive to this problem. In the Tradition cited above, the digging of a canal has been cited as an example of welfare scheme

whose blessings will go on accruing in favour of a person who may have ceased to live.

When the mother of Hadrat Saad bin Ubbada died, he proposed to dedicate a work of charity in her favour. He sought the Prophet's opinion with regard to the kind of charity he should dedicate. The Prophet suggested that he should sink a well. Hadrat Saad bin Ubbada carried out the suggestion. (Abu Dawood, kitabuz zakath; Nasai, Kitabul wasaya. Hadrat Sayeed bin Musayyab and Hadrat Hasan Basri who narrated this Tradition, did not meet the Companion concerned and so this Tradition has the status of being 'Munqata'.)

Digging a canal or sinking a well is a step towards water distribution and is of ancient origin. Tube wells or water taps are in vogue nowadays. Collecting water in ponds and tanks for distribution is another practice. All such schemes for water distribution fetch merit and reward.

Reclaiming land for agriculture

Another welfare scheme is to make unused land suitable for agriculture and to lend assistance in this endeavour. This process brings gains to both the country and the community. The state can take the initiative in reclaiming land for agriculture and the profit earned thereby can be diverted to welfare schemes, or can allow and facilitate private enterprise in this regard. Islam encourages every enterprise which brings infertile land under the plough as a meritorious deed. Hadrat Jabir narrated that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

من احيى ارضا ميتة فله فيها اجرها وما اكلت
العافية منها فهو له صدقة

"Wages await a man who fertilizes and quickens the land. When the living creatures (man, animal, bird) sustain themselves on its yield, it will be recognised as a sadaqa from him and he will be duly rewarded."
(Musnad-e-Ahmed, 3/327)

When a farmer reclaims a dry land for agriculture by the sweat of his brow, he and his family are the initial beneficiaries as he works hard for a noble purpose, he is deemed fit to earn a reward. When other creatures gain food and sustenance from the yield of the land, this service is recognised as a sadaqa from the farmer. In the light of this approach, one can form a fair impression of the quantum of reward that the farmer's service rendered to the individuals and the society through his hard work will fetch him.

Modern welfare states do provide facilities for land reclamation. Islam went a step further by declaring that he who reclaims the unused land for agriculture can claim its ownership. Hadrat Jabir bin Abdulla narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

من احيى ارضا ميتة فهي له

"The land reclaimed for agriculture belongs to him who reclaimed it." (Tirmithi, Kitabul Ahkam) Hadrat Umar said the same thing too. (Muatta, Kitabul Aqdia).

The following instructions maintain a balance between the rights of an individual and the interests of the society without disturbing either.

1. By declaring that a piece of land has remained

unused, one cannot usurp somebody's property. Hadrat Ayesha narrates that the Prophet said,

من اعمر ارضا ليست لاحد فهو احق

"Anyone who cultivates an unowned piece of land has a greater claim to its ownership." (Bukhari, chapter on agriculture)

The right of ownership will be recognised only when a person reclaims that piece of land for agriculture which has not been previously owned by someone. The Tradition narrated by Hadrat Sayeed bin Zaid is still clearer and he quotes these words of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him):

من احبب ارضا ميتة فهي له وليس لعرق ظالم حق

"That piece of land belongs to him who taps its latent resources but if it is seized by force the farmer forfeits his right." (Abu Dawood, Kitabul Khiraj; Tirmithi, Chapters on Ahkam)

That is to say, by virtue of rendering a land arable, a farmer can own that land, but under that pretext he is not permitted to annex somebody else's property and to start irrigating it. This is gross injustice and it is unacceptable under any circumstance.

In connection with the Tradition cited above, there is a report that one person planted date trees on the land belonging to another person. When this case was brought before the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him), he gave his verdict that the land should be restored to the owner and the trees should be felled and taken by the planter. Accordingly, the trees were cut down. (Abu Dawood, *ibid.*)

This judgment upholds this part of jurisprudence which asserts that when a piece of land, whose owner is not traceable, is put to agricultural use, it will be restored to the owner when he is traced and the wrongful cultivator will pay compensation. (Hidaya, 4/478)

2. According to Hanafi jurisprudence, the uncultivated land should be at a distance from human habitation. If it is in the immediate neighbourhood of the human habitation, the rules of land reclamation will not apply.

Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmed, et al say that for land reclamation official permission need not be sought from the Imam or the Head of the Islamic State. The right of anyone who cultivates the land will be recognised. Imam Abu Haneefa insists that official permission is necessary. Imam Malik is of the opinion that, if the land to be reclaimed is close to human habitation, prior official permission is needed but if that land is at a distance from the human habitation, official permission is not needed. (Hidaya, 1/478; Fathul Bari, 5/12)

3. If the state donated land is enclosed and remains unused for three years, the Islamic state reserves the right to take it back and give it to a prospective cultivator. The land was donated in the first instance in the hope that it will be cultivated and income from that land in the form of ushr and khiraj will bring benefit to the people. Mere enclosure of the land is not its cultivation.

Hadrat Umar held such a view. He said, "If one person kept the land unused for three years, and then another person took charge of the land and started cultivating it, he can claim that land as his own." (Fathul Bari, 5/14)

4. Reclamation of the land can be in the form of cultivation and farming or in the form of house construction. According to Hanafi jurisprudence, the initial steps towards estate development are included in the land reclamation (Hidaya 4/477)

5. Land reclamation is not the monopoly of the Muslims. Non-Muslims who are under the protection of the Islamic state will have the right to reclaim unused land. (ibid.)

Islamic law has comprehensive details with regard to land reclamation. A few aspects alone have been adumbrated here.

Planting of Saplings

What role trees play in the matter of nutrition, health and physical fitness is well-known. They generate pure and fresh oxygen, provide cool and refreshing shade, and bear flowers and leaves containing therapeutic and nutritive ingredients. There are trees which bear attractive and delicious fruits endowed with calories and nothing can substitute them. Even when the trees become dry and sapless, they become useful in the construction of houses, and provide fuel, and yield diverse benefits.

Everyone is aware of the advantages and impact of afforestation. Rainfall is dependent upon it, pleasant climatic changes are related to it, environmental pollution can be eliminated through it, and the ferocity of the floods can be arrested by it. There are other benefits too.

Land can be reclaimed through the development of trees and gardens. There are Traditions which draw our attention towards this aspect and make us aware of its

importance. Hadrat Anas reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

ما من مسلم يغرس غرسًا أو يزرع زرعًا فيأكل منه طير أو
إنسان أو بهيمة إلا كان له به صدقة

It is sadaqa from a Muslim when he plants a sapling or ploughs the soil which yields food and fodder for the living creatures. (Bukhari, Chapter on agriculture)

Another Tradition, narrated by Hadrat Jabir and included in Sahih Muslim, has the same theme. It is reported that the Prophet said,

ما من مسلم يغرس غرسًا إلا كان ما أكل منه له
صدقة وما سرق منه له صدقة وما أكل السبع فهو له
صدقة وما أكلت الطير فهو له صدقة ولا يرزؤه أحد إلا
كان له صدقة

"When a tree is grown and it yields something edible, then it is a sadaqa from a Muslim who planted it. Whatever is stolen from the tree also will be treated as a sadaqa from him; whatever is eaten from it either by wild animals or by birds, is a sadaqa from him; whatever is taken away from it by another person is a sadaqa too." (Muslim, Kitabul Musaqat)

Commenting on the narration of Hadrat Anas. Hafiz Ibne Hajar says, "This report contains the importance of farming and planting trees and of land reclamation." He adds that it justifies the need for keeping fertile lands in one's possession and for using them as a dwelling-place, and it repudiates the viewpoint of certain people who renounce the world and spurn material possessions. Certain Traditions may create such an impression but that

impression can be validated only when the material possessions become an obsession and a distraction from the religious duties. (Fathul Bari, 5/3)

Hadrat Muath narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

من بنى بنياناً في غير ظلم ولا اعتداء أو غرس غرساً
في غير ظلم ولا اعتداء كان له اجر جار ما انتفع به
من خلق الله تبارك وتعالى

"If a Muslim constructs a house without resorting to injustice and plants a tree without resorting to injustice, both acts will fetch him reward which will go on accruing as long as Allah's creation goes on benefiting from both." (Musnad-e-Ahmed, 3/338)

Man may have personal benefit in his view when he plants trees or nurtures gardens. He will have his reward. If he does these things for the benefit of Aam Aadmi (the common man), the reward will be proportionately higher. This is one way of earning a reward that accrues ceaselessly. That is, as long as the tree is beneficial to people, it will continue to yield merit for the person even beyond his death, until the Day of Judgment, as the report in Sahih Muslim says. When one tree grows, it may bring into existence other trees too. Similarly, a little farm may become the nucleus for bigger farms. As long as the tree or the farm is functional, and living creatures benefit from it, it will yield continuous merit and this continuity may last until the Doomsday. (Navavi, Sharh Muslim, 2/15)

A man observed Hadrat Abu Darda planting saplings in Damascus and expressed his dismay by telling the Prophet's Companion that what he was doing did not

measure up to his high status. Hadrat Abu Darda cautioned him not to find fault in haste (because his interest in trees had a religious dimension). The revered Companion had heard the Prophet (Allah's peace and blessings be with him) saying,

من غرس غرساً لم ياكل منه آدمي ولا خلق من خلق

الله الا كان له صدقة

"If a person tends a fruit-bearing tree, and a man or some other creature eats its fruit, this fruitfulness of the tree will become a sadaqa in favour of that person." (op. cit., 6/444).

The merit applicable to the trees, as delineated by the foregoing Traditions, may also apply to the acts of maintaining a row of trees on each side of the road, of tending gardens and parks, and of conserving forests.

Construction of Mosques

The main purpose of constructing a mosque is to offer worship and glory to God and so lending cooperation in the task of constructing a mosque is to directly assist in the act of worship. In the earliest period, mosques were not just places of worship; they functioned as education, social and political centres. Even though this multi-dimensional aspect of the mosques has undergone a change in the course of history, mosques can still be mentioned in the category of welfare services. A Tradition attributed to Hadrat Uthman throws light on the reward which the construction of a mosque brings. He reported that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من بنى مسجدا
يتغى به وجه الله بنى الله له مثله في الجنة

When anyone constructs a mosque in order to please Allah, Allah will construct a matching structure for him in paradise. (Bukhari, Kitabus Salat; Muslim, Kitabul Masajid)

Establishment Of Madrasas

Education plays a vital role in the intellectual orientation and the reconstruction of thought. And so, in the welfare schemes of every nation, education is given a pride of place. Islam recognizes the importance of education and endeavours earnestly to promote it too. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) declares that the dissemination of knowledge is a religious mission and has instructed that anyone who has knowledge, whatever be its quantum, should communicate it to others. In the present day, educational institutions are the main sources of promoting knowledge. From their portals emerge those specialists who skillfully manage different areas pertaining to science and technology, culture and civilization, economics and politics. In the Prophet's epoch, institutions specializing in different disciplines were not there. However, the light of knowledge spread far and wide from the mosques. Educational sessions, intellectual gatherings, discourse centres were there. (My article in Urdu on "Muhammad as an Educational Benefactor," published in Tahqeeqat-e-Islami, Aligarh, March 1987, carries some details.) In the succeeding epochs, Muslims established education centres, wherein, apart from religious

disciplines, contemporary philosophies and ideologies were discussed in the light of religious disciplines. Those centres had among their alumni people who turned out to be outstanding thinkers and titans in the area of problem-solving and applied jurisprudence.

Establishment Of Hospitals

In the pre-Islamic Arabia, people resorted to either self-medication or treatment by professionals. Medical treatment, in one sense, was either a personal problem or a family issue at the most, which was solved in the light of their experiments or resources. There were no general hospitals and health care centres for the public. This state of affairs prevailed for some period even after the advent of Islam. However, as a result of the Islamic campaign for social service, it may be claimed that the conditions for the emergence of such hospitals were created. A lady Companion of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him), Rafeedah by name, voluntarily nursed the wounded Muslim combatants, who had no one to take care of them, in a tent pitched near the Prophet's Mosque. She nursed them with the intention of earning merit. When S'ad bin Muath was seriously wounded in the Battle of the Ditch, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) instructed his tribe to keep him in Rafeedah's tent as it was quite near his Mosque and as it would enable him to call easily on the wounded Companion and ask after his health. (Ibne Hisham, *Seeratun Nabi*, 3/358; Fathul Bari, 7/290) This is confirmed in a Bukhari Tradition, *Kitabus Salat*. Rafeeda's tent was meant for nursing the wounds and serving the wounded. The narrator seems to be under the impression that the tent was exclusively meant for

Hadrat Sa'ad bin Muath. In another Bukhari Tradition, the credit for the tent is given to Banu Ghifar (Kitabul Maghazi) Hafiz ibne Hajar suggests that Rafeeda's husband might have belonged to Banu Ghifar and hence the credit. (Fathul Bari, 7/292)

This anecdote is a clear illustration of the fact that medical camps can be held when there is a need for them. Hospitals minister to this need on a permanent basis. History bears witness to the fact that Muslims had a large stake in the construction and development of hospitals.

Value of Wakf Assets in Welfare Schemes

Motivation exists to dedicate land, property and other costly assets to public causes as without them public causes cannot be sustained and these resources bring perennial merit to the donors. Some Traditions dealing with Sadaqa-e-Jariah, i.e., charity which ensures enduring merit have already been mentioned. One such Tradition is hereby presented. Hadrat Abu Huraira has reported it. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

اذا مات الانسان انقطع عنه عمله الا من ثلاثة الا
من صدقة جارية او علم ينتفع به او ولد صالح
يدعوه

When a man dies, his activities come to an end. However, three avenues are still open in which his activities survive and the dead man continues to secure wages. The ever-functioning sadaqa, the intellectual treasure bequeathed to the seekers of knowledge, and the morally upright progeny prayerfully and constantly solicitous of the parents' salvation are those three avenues. (Muslim, Kitabul Wasiya)

Imam Navavi (Rah) explains that the phrase Sadaqa-e-Jariah cited in the Tradition connotes 'Wakf' and adds that this confirms the validity of Wakf and proves that Wakf fetches a great reward. (Sharh Muslim, 2/41)

There is evidence that diverse types of Wakf were prevalent during the Prophet's era. Some types are mentioned below.

1. Seeking the reward and merit that Islam talks of with regard to the welfare schemes, the distinguished Companions (Allah be pleased with them) dedicated their best and dearest possessions to the people.

Hadrat Umar received a piece of land in Khyber as a booty of war. (The piece of land was called 'Thamagh'.) He approached the Prophet and said, "I have never received a more precious thing in my life than that piece of land in Khyber. I propose to gift it away to secure Allah's pleasure. What is the best way of doing so?" The Prophet replied, "If you so wish, the land may be retained as 'Wakf' and its yield may be given away as charity."

Acting upon this suggestion, Hadrat Umar dedicated the land on the terms given below.

"The base is not saleable; it cannot be gifted away; it cannot be inherited. Its income is to be spent on the deprived, on the relatives (who qualify on account of their poverty), and for the emancipation of the slaves, and as a resource for Jihad, and on guests and travellers. The trustee, in charge of the land, can spend a part of the income on himself and on his friends as per the convention but he is not allowed to amass wealth from the income." (Bukhari and Muslim, Kitabul Wasaya)

The rules which can be inferred on the issue of Wakf

from this Tradition are not under discussion here. It is sufficient to know that for the public welfare schemes,, donors took recourse to the establishment of Wakf and this dedication (by Hadrat Umar) is an illustration of such a recourse.

2. To meet the religious and social needs of the Muslims, a few Companions dedicated their joint property.

On reaching Medina, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) decided to construct a mosque and selected a piece of land for the purpose. That piece of land belonged to Banu Najjar. He called their representatives and asked them about the price of that land. They replied, "We don't seek any price. By Allah, we seek its price from Him." (Bukhari, Kitabus Salat; Muslim, Kitabul Masajid) In this way, the Prophet's Mosque was raised on the Wakf land. On its basis, it can be inferred that a piece of land owned by more than one person can be turned into a Wakf land with the consent of the owners. [Bukhari, Kitabul Wasaya, includes this Tradition in the chapter with the title, "Wakf of a joint land holding is permissible with the owners' consent". Waqidi reports that Hadrat Abu Bakr bought the Banu Najjar's land by paying ten dinars. Hafiz Ibne Hajar is of the opinion that Waqidi's report does not neutralize Imam Bukhari's viewpoint because the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) did not reject the Banu Najjar's offer on the ground that the piece of land was jointly owned and so it could not be changed into Wakf land. (Fathul Bari, 5/ 258) Ibne Hubaira writes that the four Imams agree on the premise that a joint holding can be changed into Wakf land. (Al-Afsah, 2/52) Neelul Autar

6/133 and Ibne Qudamah, Al- Moghni, 5/243, 244 may be consulted to ascertain the jurists' views on the subject.]

3. As soon as the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) highlighted a particular social need or welfare service, it was met by the creation of Wakf. For example, once he declared that if someone could buy a particular piece of land and donate it for the extension of the Prophet's Mosque, the donor would get a better piece of land in paradise. Hadrat Usman (Allah be pleased with him) bought it with his money and surrendered it for the extension of the Prophet's Mosque. (Tirmithi, Kitabul Manaqib; Nasai, Kitabul Ahbas)

When the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) migrated to Medina, the city had only one well with potable water and it was called Beir Roma and so he announced that if someone could buy it and make an endowment of it and have as much claim on it as any other Muslim, such a person could look forward to a better compensation for it in paradise. Hadrat Usman seized the opportunity immediately. (ibid., Bukhari, chapter on agriculture. According to one version, the well belonged to one Romatul Ghifari and so the well was named after him. He had been converted to Islam. Hadrat Usman bought the well from him against the payment of 35,000 dirhams. (Navavi, Tahzeebul Asma, 1/36) According to another version, it was a well or a pond. Its owner belonged to Banu Ghifar and he sold a certain quantity of water against a particular quantum of cereals. The Prophet asked him to surrender it to him in lieu of a better pond in paradise. He replied that his children's survival depended on the income derived from the well. On hearing this, Hadrat Usman bought the well from him for the amount mentioned

and changed it into a Wakf well. (Neelul Autar, 6/131)

4. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) appreciated it that Wakf should be created on behalf of the deceased in order that merit could go on accruing in his or her favour. This wish was implemented during his own period. There is this classic example of Hadrat Sa'ad bin Ubbadah. He told the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) that his mother (Umrah, daughter of Mas'ood) died suddenly. At that time he was not present. He wanted to know if an endowment established in her name would fetch her a reward. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) replied that it would. Then Hadrat Sa'ad declared, "Please bear testimony, O Prophet, that I offer a particular orchard of mine as a sadaqa for my (deceased) mother." (Bukhari, Kitabul Wasaya.) [Another Tradition in Bukhari narrates that his mother died without making a votive offering and the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) authorized him to make such an offering on her behalf. Hafiz ibne Hajar says that Hadrat Sa'ad might have made inquiries about the votive offering and sadaqa. According to Nasai, a well was sunk on his mother's behalf. One Tradition says that she had made a vow to set a slave free. (Fathul Bari, 5/252,253) Relevant Traditions have been collected in Nasai, Kitabul Wasaya.]

The custom of creating Wakfs for the welfare of the people was ever prevalent during all periods and it greatly enabled the welfare schemes to run smoothly.

Certain other instructions supplemented the above-mentioned Islamic precepts about welfare schemes.

Public Property Should Not Be Vandalized

On the one hand, Islam promotes the practice of planting saplings and on the other, it prohibits the cutting of the fruit-bearing and shade-giving trees. Hadrat Abdullah bin Habashi narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) warned,

من قطع سدرۃ صوّب الله رأسه فی النار

"Allah would throw headlong into hell that person who cuts down a lote-tree."

If the lote-tree is someone's property, the proprietor can cut it down or he can put it to personal use. It is no sin to do either. In this Tradition, warning is given regarding that lote-tree which is not a personal property and which serves some public utility.

Imam Abu Dawood has narrated this Tradition and explains it in this way. "There is a lote-tree in an open space. Travellers and animals relax under its shade. If someone cuts down such a tree without rhyme or reason and on account of rancour and if he has no legal claim over the tree, then Allah will fling him headlong into hell." (Abu Dawood, Kitabul Adab. For more Traditions of this category and for their context, Baihaqi, As-sunanul Kubra, 6/140,141 may be referred to.)

It will not be wide of the mark if one deduces from this Tradition that it is a sin to damage public property because it is tantamount to inflicting pain on and causing harm to God's creatures by depriving them of the source of rest and relaxation. Such an act is severely reprehensible and extremely undesirable in God's view.

Resources of life belong to all

All those resources which are stored in abundance on this earth to meet human needs and in whose provenance no human effort has been involved are meant for all and everyone has the right to take advantage of them. This is the Islamic viewpoint. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

المسلمون شركاء في ثلاث في الماء والكأ والنار

"All Muslims have a joint stake in three things- water, fodder, and fire." (An anonymous Mohajir Companion narrates this Sahih Tradition in Abu Dawood, Kitabul Buyoo; in Ibne Maaja, Abwabur Rahooon, the narrator is specifically named as Hadrat Abdullah ibne Abbas but the status of the Tradition is weak.)

"Water" in this Tradition refers to water bodies like natural lakes, oceans, rivers, and ponds. "Fodder" refers to the verdure in the forests and the fields. "Fire" refers to firewood and other stuff helpful in making fire like flint. (Neelul Autar, 6/49, 50)

Resources of national importance are meant for all

No individual will have a monopoly over those resources of life which possess a nationwide importance. All will have equality of opportunity in availing themselves of those resources. Abyad bin Hammal reports that once he presented himself before the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) and requested that the salt quarry in Maarib (a part of Yemen) be granted to him. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) gave his assent. When Abyad returned, a person (Aqra bin Habis) submitted to the Prophet (Allah's

blessings and peace be with him) that one individual had been given a whole quarry in which salt was as abundant as water in the sea and which was once under the access of the local population. In response to this representation, the salt quarry was taken back and rendered into Wakf property for the benefit of the people. (According to one report, in lieu of the salt quarry, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) gave Abyad a piece of land and a garden.)

Abyad bin Hammal had put another question too whether an area covered with Araak trees (whose leaves are eaten by the camels) could be taken possession of with the help of an enclosure. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) replied, "(The condition for it is that) it should be a place not frequented by the camels." That is, the area should be at a distance from human habitation. (Tirmithi, chapters on commandments; Ibne Maaja, Abwabur Ruhoon)

From this it can be learnt that, with regard to those resources of existence which benefit the public, even the government cannot take a decision in such a way as to put the resources under the complete control of an individual or a group of individuals and to deprive others of access to them.

The jurists have written that the ruler cannot give to an individual anything that common Muslims need, like salt quarries or wells which the people in the neighbourhood derive benefit from. (Hidaya, 4/478)

Even though the examples given here are those of salt and water, one cannot rule out other necessities. Allama Ibne Hubaira writes that there is a consensus of opinion

among the four Imams that one individual cannot usurp and monopolize salt pans or anything that Muslims benefit from. (Al Afsah, 2/51)

Others have a right over personal assets too

By dint of hard work and grim struggle, man may secure access to the treasures of the earth and take possession of them. For example, to meet one's personal needs, one may sink a well, dig a canal, or store water in a pond or a tank. The standing order in this matter is that the needy persons should not be denied access to it. In one Tradition a severe warning is given to that person who has a surplus supply of water and yet who does not permit others to make use of it. Hadrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) mentioned that Allah would neither look at nor talk to three categories of people on the Day of Judgment. Instead, He would severely punish them. About one of those categories, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) used the following words:

رجل كان له فضل ماء بالطريق فمنعه من ابن السبيل

A man who had stored water enough and to spare (in a well or so, situated) on the roadside and yet he prevented a traveller from using it. (Bukhari, chapter on agriculture; Muslim, Kitabul Iman)

Another Tradition has this statement:

فيقول الله اليوم امنعك كما منعت فضل ما لم
تعمل يداك

Allah will announce on the Day of Judgment, "I will deny you My reward today, as you had denied

(others) a share in the surplus of that commodity in whose creation your effort was not involved."*

This Tradition gives a fair idea of how much emphasis Islam lays on the need to think of others' requirements in the assets one has, when one's requirements have already been met.

* (Bukhari, chapter on agriculture. To what extent is it necessary to fulfil the need of others when a man has an abundant supply of water? A detailed reply is available in Fathul Bari, 5/21)

Chapter 12

Institutions and Organizations dedicated to Social Service

The Need and Importance of Institutions

Some basic needs and natural urges accompany man since his birth. To fulfil them, the family, the philanthropic individuals, the human welfare institutions, and the government go on lending him their cooperation at different stages. If this cooperation is given to the fullest extent, the chances of man's existence, survival, and progress brighten up. Any deficiency in the cooperation will proportionately and adversely affect those chances. From a person's point of view, it may be conceded that more often than not there appears no radical difference between the cooperation of the individuals and that of the institutions because every help is temporary in nature. For example, the services of educational, economic, and medical institutions may be considered. When a student completes his course of study, the duty of the alma mater is over. When an unemployed person gets employed, the responsibility of the economic institution (guaranteeing placement) is completed. After providing medical facilities to the extent possible, the infirmaries and hospitals are absolved from their obligation. A person's family or his sympathiser can perform similar duties. The importance of the institutions is comparatively greater when it is realized that the scope of their services covers the entire

population and its various groups. The institutions address the needs of a whole society and not merely the needs of an individual. To educate a person and enable him to occupy a position of honour in society is just a service rendered to that person. But, to run a school wherein scores of students hone and harness their cognitive and vocational skills is to serve a whole generation. Similarly, it is just personal assistance if a jobless young man is given a situation. But, to establish an institution wherein scores of people eke their livelihood is to offer cooperation to a whole working class. Welfare organizations endeavour to uplift, not just an individual, but the society as a whole. Institutions dedicated to religion and reform render services which cannot be overlooked. In fact, their services are more important than those rendered for the fulfilment of the material needs.

Welfare institutions function as the coordinating and integrating agents for the different schemes of social service and consequently eliminate imbalance and disorder. Service is being rendered to each in keeping with the level of help each genuinely requires. The wide-ranging and efficacious services being rendered by the welfare institutions are there for all to see and they are utilised when the need arises. There are institutions in the developed countries to meet every essential need of man. Establishing and running such institutions are in sync with the precepts of Islam. They serve a great purpose of this religion.

It Pays To Strive In A Concerted Manner

Every epoch has made those individuals prominent through whom welfare schemes were implemented. Some of those schemes were extraordinary and brought maximum benefit to humanity. However, such individuals were few and an individual can but have a limited potential and competence. Therefore, it will be beyond his means to launch massive schemes of social service and public welfare on a large scale. It follows then that many individuals should pool their resources and strive in a concerted manner. Organizations do not have the disadvantage of depending on a single person and they take full advantage of the skills and resources available to them through a large number of members. Consequently, they command maximum buoyancy and it is possible for them to take up tasks which are beyond the reach of an individual. An organization achieves more easily a goal that an individual finds hard to realize. If a concerted effort is made for social service, and welfare schemes are implemented in a team spirit, the area of their utility will be considerably enlarged, and those tasks, which an individual fails to execute in spite of giving importance to them, get completed through concerted efforts. Sustained and ceaseless efforts of not one individual or two but of many members are needed to establish, manage, and run professionally gigantic welfare institutions. Without such efforts, these institutions cannot come into existence and, even if they manage to get started, they cannot fulfil their objectives.

Islam established the system of Zakat at the state level. It becomes the duty of the state now to collect Zakat from the people whose qualification to pay is

determined by Shariah and to distribute it among the people who deserve to receive it according to the Qur'anic injunction. This is a pointer to the fact that Islam approves of and encourages an organized method of social service.

Cooperation with Non-Muslims

There is no objection to the act of cooperating with Non-Muslim organizations and institutions which aim at serving humanity and ensuring its welfare. The basic teaching of the Qur'an in this respect is as follows:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ
وَالْعَدْوَانِ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝ (المائدة: ٢)

Help ye one another in righteousness and piety but help ye not one another in sin and rancour: fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment. (5:2)

There was no stable political system in the Arabian peninsula before the advent of the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him). Consequently, there prevailed political and social instability; life and property remained precarious. Might was right, and the weaker sections were exposed to the tyranny of the strong who had a field day. There was no mechanism to restrain and reprimand them. At the slightest provocation, armed conflict, bloodshed, oppression, and persecution reared their ugly heads. No one was there to nip the evil in the bud. The state of affairs in Mecca, the metropolis and abode of peace, was no better. Some concerned citizens proposed to set things right and assembled in the house of Abdullah, son of Jad'aan, for consultation, and resolved to

eliminate oppression and injustice irrespective of consequences. No person, whether Meccan or Non-Meccan, would be allowed to suffer injustice; assistance would be provided to the innocent victim to secure his legitimate right against the oppressor; and succour would be given to the needy.

The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) was one of the consultants in the preparation of this resolution. This happened at a time when Prophethood had not been conferred on him. He was all praise for this resolution whenever he recalled it, days after Prophethood was conferred on him. He used to say,

لقد شهدت في دار عبد الله ابن جدعان حلفا ما احب

ان لي به حمر النعم ولو ادعى به في الاسلام لاجبت

"I participated in the preparation of a pledge at the house of Abdullah bin Jad'aan. I would not exchange the pledge even for a red camel (a proud possession for an Arab). Remaining a Muslim, I would respond again (with the same enthusiasm) to an invitation to be a party to such a (noble) resolution."

The organization dedicated to the eradication of oppression and injustice and to the welfare and service of humanity is a jewel in the crown of the society. Any society bereft of such an organization is morally impoverished. It is Islam's obligation to protect and nurture such an organization to its full growth.

Cooperaton with the state

The biggest apparatus for social service is the State. It is possible for the individuals and the institutions to be powerful but it cannot be denied that a premium can be

put on their power. They do not command as many resources as are needed for a comprehensive scheme of social service and for a master plan of conflict resolution. The State commands extraordinary resources and can adopt different strategies to achieve its target. That is why, it is presumed that the legal and moral responsibility of a welfare state is to restructure the social order in such a way as to ensure that no citizen remains deprived of the basic necessities of survival, and every citizen has access to those facilities and opportunities which are essential for his progress. A state oblivious of its responsibility cannot justify its existence. It goes without saying that the State can discharge its onerous responsibility only when its citizens offer their cooperation. By its own effort only, the State cannot purge the society of its ailments like poverty, indigence, ignorance, unemployment, ill-health, etc. For such a purge to happen, it is incumbent that there should be a strong desire in every citizen to extricate the society from its degradation and elevate it to a sublime level. The duty of social service can be genuinely discharged when the State and its citizenry establish mutual cooperation. Otherwise the task will remain incomplete and deficient.

Chapter 13

The Right Attitude Towards Social Service

The importance of social service is now well-established. The stronger the desire to serve, the greater the social good. Unfortunately, there are some misconceptions about social service; Islam has exposed them and has given the right viewpoint instead. There are a few deviations from the norm; Islam has neutralized them and has pointed out the middle path. An attempt at elucidation is made in this chapter.

Man has to bear the yoke of various duties

Man cannot live in society and yet remain isolated. He has to maintain contacts with numerous people. Some of them carry his responsibilities; he is responsible for some others. Some press their claims over him; he presses his claims over some. This sphere of rights and responsibilities encompasses many people from far and near. Any deficient approach towards these rights and responsibilities cannot but adversely affect the entire society.

There is a natural sequence of rights

There is a natural sequence of rights and responsibilities. Man has to give first priority to his own self. Then come the rights of parents, wife and children,

and other relatives. The rights of others outside the family come next. Islam prescribes this scheme of priorities. Man is free to give preference to the rights of others over the right of his own self. Similarly, relatives may renounce or reduce their own rights (over him). However, it is not proper for him to overlook the rights of the relatives and give priority to those of the non-relatives. He cannot rearrange the prescribed sequence of priorities. The rights which are declared foremost will always remain foremost. The sequence of priorities that Islam prescribes can be easily understood in the light of the following Tradition. "Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

عن ابي هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم خير
الصدقة ما كان عن ظهر غنى وابدء بمن تعول

The best sadaqa is that which is given after one's personal needs have been fulfilled. Spend first on those whose expenses you are obliged to meet."
(Bukhari, Kitabuz Zakat. Further explanation in Fathul Bari, 3/190)

Another Tradition of Abu Huraira makes the issue still clearer. He reports:

امر النبي ﷺ بالصدقة فقال رجل يا رسول الله عندي
دينار قال تصدق به على نفسك قال عندي آخر قال
تصدق به على ولدك قال عندي آخر قال تصدق
به على زوجتك قال عندي آخر قال تصدق به على
خادمك قال عندي آخر قال انت ابصر

Once the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be

with him) ordered that sadaqa should be given. On hearing this order, a man asked him what he should do with a dinar which he had with him. The Prophet replied, "Spend it on yourself." Then the same person said that he had another dinar. The Prophet replied, "Spend it on your son." Then the same person said that he had one more dinar. The Prophet replied, "Spend it on your wife." The same person said that he had a fourth dinar. The Prophet replied, "Spend it on your slave." The same person wanted to know what he should do with the fifth dinar. The Prophet replied, "You are discerning enough to decide the matter yourself." (Abu Dawood and Nasai, Kitabuz.Zakat)

The right of relatives remains foremost

On account of one's idiosyncrasy or personal rancour or family dispute, man sometimes tends to ignore the prerogative of the relatives. He is not prepared to extend sympathy and goodwill towards his relatives but demonstrates at every step his desire to endear himself to others through love, sacrifice, and generosity. Remaining supercilious and insouciant towards one's kith and kin, he gets engrossed in the welfare schemes available in the world. This behaviour goes against the grain and so Islam forbids it. Allah ordains that money should be spent on various deeds of virtue. The most rewarding deed is to spend on the members of the family and the relatives; this is borne out by the following report of Hadrat Abu Huraira.

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم دينار انفقته
 فى سبيل الله و دينار انفقته فى رقبة و دينار
 تصدقت به على مسكين و دينار انفقته على اهلك

اعظمها اجرا الذى انفقته على اهلك

"The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said: You spend a dinar in Allah's way; you spend a dinar in freeing a slave; you spend a dinar on a poor person; and you spend a dinar on your wife and children. The highest reward is reserved for the dinar spent on your wife and children." (Muslim, Kitabuz Zakat)

The rights of the people left destitute should not be overlooked

Man loves himself and the people close to him and so he seldom neglects his own and their rights. Sometimes this love inhibits the rendering of social service in a wider area, because man overlooks the fact that, just as his own self and his own relatives have a right over him, the poor, the deprived, and the needy have a right over him too. He does not get to know their needs and does not sympathise with them in their hardships. He turns his attention away from their rights and concentrates on his own self and family. To provide for their happiness and comfort, he does not hesitate to deprive innumerable people of their rights and to trample upon those rights. This is an atrocity and a gesture of ill-will towards the society as a whole. Goodwill towards the society demands that man should be scrupulous in observing everyone's right and should abstain from harming the interest of any individual. Islam urges that man should observe the rights of one's self and of the relatives and it orders him simultaneously not to take any step that is likely to be harmful to anyone. He is expected to constantly strive for the welfare and progress of one and

all. That society will soon go to rack and ruin in which the rights of the vulnerable people are not enforced. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) stated:

ان الله لا يقـدس امة لا يؤخذ للضعيف فيهم حقه

Verily Allah will not treat that nation as pure and blameless which does not accommodate the rights of the weaker sections. (Mishkat, Kitabul Buyoo, section on gifts; quoted in Sharh Sunnah)

Man's excessive regard for one's own self and family knows no boundaries. He opts for a life of luxury and endeavours to extend the same standard of living to those who are dependent on him. To succeed in this endeavour it is well-nigh impossible to avoid harming the interests of other deserving people. According to Islam, man is duty-bound to supply the basic needs of his self and of his relatives, and then, he has to pay attention to the needs of the other members of the society. This fact is driven home in the following verse of the Qur'an:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ (البقرة: ٢١٩)

They ask you how much they are to spend; say, "What is beyond your needs." (2:219)

The word used in the Qur'an for the money to be spent on the welfare schemes is "afv" and it refers to that surplus wealth which remains after meeting the expenses on personal and family requirements. (There are several interpretations for the word 'Afv'. Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas explains that it refers to the balance amount after family expenses have been met. Many other Companions and other succeeding scholars hold the same view and it is corroborated by the Marfoo Traditions- attributed to the Prophet. Vide Tafseer of Ibne.Katheer, 1/256) What

precisely the personal and family requirements are is not determined because the requirements vary from person to person and from family to family. Likewise it is not improper for him to be mindful of the personal and family comfort and of the future requirements of self and family. What Islam does not countenance is that man should become totally oblivious of the afflicted and the starving people in his obsessive pursuit of the feel-good factor.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the rights of those who are closely related take precedence over the rights of others but the fulfilment of the rights of the close relatives does not absolve one from the duties which are obligatory upon a member of the society. A person who keeps constantly in view the family rights and the social obligations and strives to fulfil both will be the pick of the society. Islam aims at preparing one exactly to be the pick of the society.

The distinction between the rich and the poor is not unalterably fixed

Islam persistently ordains that the weak, the poor, and the deprived sections of the society should be taken care of and courteously treated. However, unlike the monastic orders and lop-sided economic ideologies, Islam does not divide the society into two rigid classes in such a way that one class is economically stable and enjoys all advantages whereas the other class is constantly dependent on and ever at the mercy of the first group to make ends meet. The ideal of Islam is that everyone should be economically self-sufficient, one should not be

obliged to seek monetary help from others, one should be able to earn one's livelihood, and should try to meet the expenses of personal and family requirements in a legitimate manner. In the eyes of Islam, these efforts attract divine compensation. Islam orders the people who have abundant wealth and are in a position to help others to reach out to the weak in their distress and to enable them to secure economic stability. It compels the state to provide subsidies to the economically weak, and to extend support by bearing the economic burden of those incapable of earning their livelihood. This is a strategy to uplift the society and make it self-sufficient.

This point can be fully comprehended in the light of the categories eligible to receive Zakat.

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا
وَالْمَوْلَافَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغُرَمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
حَكِيمٌ (التوبة: ٦٠)

"Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer (the funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to the Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah; and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom."
(9:60)

Men who are affluent and theologically eligible to pay Zakat are no doubt asked by Islam to set Zakat apart and spend it on the categories enumerated in the verse above. However, Islam has not instituted a permanent mechanism to ensure that these categories should

necessarily last for ever and that there should always be economically disadvantaged people qualified to receive alms and be dependent on others for their subsistence, and that there should always be one section to pay and another to receive Zakat.

There is a consensus among the scholars, in spite of a few differences in the details of application, that Zakat could be diverted from a place where it is not needed to a place where it is needed. (Ibne Hubaira, Alafsaḥ, 1/228)

This legal opinion makes the fact abundantly clear that Islam has not taken pains to perpetuate a group that will solely depend on alms and charity through the system of Zakat but has only ensured that people who are economically weak and have no systematic economic support should have some economic arrangement for their survival.

Relief for personal and social requirements can be sought

In principle, Islam is against the public lamenting about one's plight and begging for charity. However, under straitened circumstances, a person is permitted by Islam to explain his need and to seek necessary help. Hadrat Qabeesa bin Mukhariq tells that once he had taken upon himself a financial responsibility and sought help from the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him), who instructed him to stay in Medina a little longer and hoped that some sadaqa might be made available in the meantime and it could be given to him. The Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) added further:

يا قبيصة ان المسألة لا تحل الا لاحد ثلاثة رجل تحمّل

حَمَالَةٌ حَلَّتْ لَهُ الْمَسْئَلَةُ حَتَّى يَصِيهَا ثُمَّ يَمْسُكُ وَ
 رَجُلٌ أَصَابَتْهُ جَائِحَةٌ اجْتَانَتْ مَالَهُ حَتَّى يَصِيبَ قَوَامًا
 مِنْ عَيْشٍ أَوْ قَالَ سَدَادًا مِنْ عَيْشٍ وَ رَجُلٌ أَصَابَتْهُ فَاقَةٌ
 حَتَّى يَقُومَ ثَلَاثَةَ مِنْ ذَوَى الْحِجَى مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَقَدْ أَصَابَتْ
 فَلَانًا فَاقَةٌ فَجَلَّتْ لَهُ الْمَسْئَلَةُ حَتَّى يَصِيبَ قَوَامًا مِنْ
 عَيْشٍ أَوْ سَدَادًا مِنْ عَيْشٍ فَمَا سِوَاهُنِ مِنَ الْمَسْئَلَةِ يَا
 قَبِيصَةَ سَحْتًا يَا كُلِّهَا صَاحِبَهُمَا سَحْتًا

"Except for three types of people, begging per se is not permissible. There is one type of a person who has volunteered to pay off the debts of others. He can raise funds by making a plea for it until the amount required is collected; then he must stop collecting more. There is the second type who is a victim of an accident in which he has lost everything. He is allowed to collect money from others until his condition improves, (or until he is rendered above want). There is the third type who has reached the stage of starvation and three members of his community testify to his condition. He is also permitted to ask for alms until his condition improves or he ceases to be in want. O Qabeesa! Apart from these three types, no other type of seeking alms is permissible, and one who earns a meal by wrongful means eats something strictly forbidden." (Muslim, Kitabuz Zakat)

This Tradition permits three types of people to seek financial help. One of them is that person who has agreed to meet a certain financial commitment in order to put an end to disputes and contentious issues and to bring about a compromise between two warring groups. Such a person, not in a position to meet the commitment all by himself, can approach others to bail him out. It is a debt

that he has contracted and the society should come forward to rescue him from the tight corner. (Vide Khattabi, Mualimus Sunan, 2/67-68 for elucidation)

Mutual hostilities are ruinous to both individuals and institutions. One group is guilty of injustice and another group is hell-bent upon revenge. One group demands something more than what is legally due to it and another group either does not recognize the rights of the first group or is prepared to give it less than the quantum legally sanctioned. When these differences get aggravated beyond a limit, life and property suffer huge losses. On certain occasions such disputes can be terminated by offering financial aid and thus reconciliation can take place. Volunteering to bear a financial burden in order to foster a compromise between two individuals or groups at loggerheads is a handsome gesture of social service. This Tradition allows this volunteer to beg for financial assistance from others. The state and the society should help him out.

The second person, allowed to beg, is the one economically affected by calamities originating from the earth or the sky. Flood, hurricanes, earthquake, fire, riots - any one of these calamities can reduce a well-to-do person all of a sudden to the level of a person living below poverty line. It is justifiable for him in these circumstances to seek help and make ends meet.

Imam Khattabi maintains that if someone's belongings are either swept away in a flood or charred in a fire or his agricultural produce like cereals or fruits is affected by a disease or he is afflicted with some such misfortune, it is permissible for him to seek alms and it is the bounden

duty of the people to offer him sadaqa and charity. There is no need to demand a proof of his plight from him; the destruction wrought by the calamity speaks volumes for his utter helplessness. (Mualimus Sunan, 2/67)

The narrator of the Tradition is in two minds with regard to the exact wording that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) used. He is not quite sure whether the Prophet said, 'until his condition improves and he picks himself up' or 'until he is no longer in want'. The point is that both statements are similar in meaning.* What they imply is that he should be able to muster resources to the extent that it becomes easy for him to meet his requirements and his condition becomes economically viable. 'Qiwam min aish' refers to the factors which are crucial to human existence. The disruption and the disconnect that poverty causes in life are referred to in the expression, 'sadaam min aish'. It is a fact that Islām looks upon the fulfilment of his basic needs as a birthright of man and, to secure that fulfilment, it permits man to seek financial help.

The sudden turn of events, mentioned in the Tradition, may overtake any man any time. An attempt should always be made to meet the basic needs of a person unsettled by such a turn of events. Individuals can make such an attempt, and institutions can do so too. It will not be easy to devise a strategy for rehabilitation and for making good

*Imam Navavi states that 'Assadaad' and 'Alqiwam' both are synonymous and they denote a state in which there is no scarcity and all needs are fulfilled. (Sharh Muslim, 1/334) Allama Ibne Atheer explains 'Qiwam min aish' as that which fulfils its need or that it is a pillar which sustains and keeps a thing straight and aloft, (An-Nihaya fi Gharibil Hadith, 3/258) and explains 'Sadaadam min Aish' as that which is sufficient in fulfilling a need or that which supplies what is scarce. (ibid., 2/153)

the loss, if the unavoidable needs of man are not supplied. In that case, the mind of the affected person will not be even inclined to entertain plans for further progress and upper mobility.

The third type allowed to beg is a person rendered helpless by starvation. His family, his locality, and his town can bear testimony to his helplessness. The causes of his poverty and starvation may be many like unemployment, inadequate income, chronic disease, etc. Whatever be the cause, if a man has come to such a pass that he is not able to keep the wolf from the door, then he has every right to beg. Others are morally, and sometimes even legally, obliged to rush him help and snatch him from the jaws of death. However, it goes without saying that it is more imperative to address and remove the causes which have landed him into such a predicament. Otherwise, as long as these causes persist, he will be obliged to continue to seek alms and his need will not come to an end. This is an unacceptable situation, in the eyes of Islam.

(Please note that in this Tradition the need for a witness in support of a certain person affected by a calamity is not mentioned because the loss is self-evident and a proof of his privation and poverty. However, if a person who has done himself well, suddenly claims that he has fallen on evil days on account of burglary, misappropriation, usurpation, fraud or some such disaster, then it becomes necessary for three sensible persons close to him to corroborate his claim. Their testimony will not be in the nature of legal evidence because the Islamic law of evidence requires two witnesses only. Their testimony is required as a part of

vetting and confirming the claim. Vide Khattabi, *Mualimus Sunan*, 2/67. It may be surmised that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) might be discouraging people from begging under the false claim of starvation. He might be putting a restriction on the practice of begging.)

Traditions include the category of harassed debtors too among the people allowed to seek alms. In a tradition, narrated by Hadrat Anas, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

من عيش او قال سدادا من عيش و رجل اصابته فاقة
حتى يقوم ثلاثة من ذوى الحجى من قومه لقد اصاب
فلانا فاقة فحلت له المسئلة حتى يصيب قواماً من
عيش او سدادا من عيش فما سواهن من المسئلة يا
قبیصة سحتاً يا كلها صاحبهما سحتاً

Permissible it is for three types of people to beg for financial assistance; one, a person whom poverty has stripped him of everything and brought him low; two, a person who is heavily burdened with debt; three, a murderer who has no means of paying blood-money to escape capital punishment or someone who has to pay it on his behalf. (Abu Dawood, *Kitabuz Zakat*. Several Traditions dealing with this theme are also found in Tirmithi, Nasai, and Musnade Ahmed.)

Caught in the tentacles of credit, man finds no escape route. This results sometimes in the winding up of his business and he is left in the lurch with no other source of livelihood. Non-settlement of debts forces firms to close and huge companies to shut down. At present, such individuals and business concerns are dealt with in two

ways- one, declaration of bankruptcy precedes the closure of business. This rash act ruins the well-being of the families and leaves them destitute. Their booming economy is busted.

Two, a supposedly more humane approach is to advance a larger loan to tide over the financial crisis. But, what is overlooked is the fact that loans are interlinked with interest. This ostensibly humane gesture ultimately takes undue advantage of someone's financial crisis. The vicious cycle of more loans and more interest goes on gyrating and any breakthrough from this cycle becomes impossible. To escape from this stifling situation the failed businessman feels obliged to think of declaring his personal bankruptcy and closing his firms and factories.

Islam maintains that if someone has contracted a debt in a legitimate manner for a legitimate purpose and if he is not wilfully responsible for making the debt a bad debt, then the society has the moral duty to extricate him from his worry. He can make an appeal to the society and the state for relief. One of the recipients of Zakat is a Muslim in debt.

A comparative study of the two systems will lead one inexorably to conclude that the conduct of Islam is based on sympathy and humanitarianism and the way which advocates the policy of bankruptcy and of more loans and more interest smacks of unkind and relentless exploitation.

No one-to-one correspondence between social service and Islam

First beliefs and then good deeds constitute the basis

of Islam. Good deeds do not form a monolith and are not of uniform importance. Some good deeds take precedence over some others. Some good deeds have the status of being the pillars of faith; some other good deeds are treated as indispensable; still some others are considered desirable; a few more have a nod of approval. In the terminology of jurisprudence, the gradation of the good deeds is made clear and specific through terms such as Fard (mandatory), Wajib (most essential), Mandoob and Mustahab (desirable) and Mubah (permissible). The legal system of Islam allots to various deeds their specific places in the hierarchy of importance which should be scrupulously upheld. Otherwise the whole system will go haywire.

Undoubtedly, Shariat has accorded great significance to social service. At the same time, social service is not made identical with the whole religion of Islam or with its summum bonum. It is claimed about some saints that for them service was worship. The motive behind such a claim may be a desire to emphasize the importance of social service; if the claim is made as a literal truth, it sounds hyperbolic because this claim would reduce the importance of other more compelling dimensions of religion, or reduce the amount of attention that ought to have been given to those dimensions or suppress more prominent aspects of their hagiography. Votaries of other religions have preferred this one-sided approach as they are of the opinion that the soul and upshot of religion is nothing more than service to man. The polytheists of Mecca held such an opinion at the advent of Islam; as they were in charge of the maintenance of the holy Ka'bah and of supplying water to and serving the pilgrims, they

looked upon these duties as highly meritorious and complimented themselves on their privilege and considered themselves most eligible to be the custodians of the Ka'bah. Islam does not accommodate imbalance and disequilibrium in any matter and allots the right place and priority to each deed and this protocol transforms the realm of existence into a thing of beauty. That is why, the Qur'an informed the polytheists of Mecca that their services were not on a par with the superior system of beliefs and deeds like belief in Allah and the Hereafter, Prayer and Zakat, fear of God and fearlessness in other matters, struggle to establish religion, sacrifice of life and property in Allah's way, migration and Jihad. Only those who are equipped with such a system are eligible to be the custodians of the Ka'bah and not others.

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَ
 أَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَى
 أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ۝ أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ
 الْحَاجِّ وَ عِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ
 وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَ جَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ
 اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ
 هَاجَرُوا وَ جَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ
 أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ۝
 يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَ جَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا
 نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ ۝ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ
 عَظِيمٌ ۝

(التوبة: ١٨-٢٢)

"The mosques of Allah shall be visited and maintained

by such as believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish regular prayers, and practise regular charity, and fear none (at all) except Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance. Do you make the giving of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque, equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and strive with might and main in the cause of Allah? They are not comparable in the sight of Allah: and Allah guides not those who do wrong.

Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allah's cause, with their goods and persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are the people who will achieve (salvation).

Their Lord does give them glad tidings of a Mercy from Himself, of His good Pleasure, and of Gardens for them, wherein are delights that endure:

They will dwell therein forever. Verily in Allah's presence is a reward, the greatest (of all)." (9:19-22)

It is a fact that religion makes several demands. One such important demand is to serve man and struggle for his welfare. However, fulfilment of this demand alone does not exempt the religious person from other obligations; whenever religion calls upon him to perform a certain duty, he must respond to the call and discharge the duty fully.

Chapter 14

Sincerity Is Of The Essence

The important question to ask in relation to any action is what triggered it. There can be good motives and there can be bad motives too behind a single act. Islam gives primary importance to the motivating factor behind every act. Islam is not content with the goodness of the act per se; it demands that the motivating factors behind the good act should be above board. According to Islam, "Ikhlas" or the sincerity of commitment is the approved motive; and the motive which is not approved is "Riya" or showcasing one's performance to secure people's applause without reference to God's approval.

Render service for Allah's sake

Social service is a humongous deed of righteousness and a means to securing proximity to God. Man should render this service with a sense of commitment and with the sole purpose of pleasing God; only then he will qualify to receive the promised compensation and reward. The holy Qur'an has made this fact crystal clear while discussing the subject of 'Infaq' which means the disbursement of cash and other valuables because the doling out of money is a regular feature at every step while rendering social service. In the process, financial spending poses a problem but a greater problem is the act of preserving the purity of commitment. There is a handsome tribute in the Qur'an and also the good news of

salvation for those souls noted for their largesse.

وَسَيَجْزِيهَا الْآتِقَىٰ ۖ الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَا لَهُ يَنْزَكِي ۖ وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ
عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ۖ وَ
لَسَوْفَ يَرْضَىٰ ۖ (الْبَلَد: ۱۷-۲۱)

"But those most devoted to Allah shall be removed far from it (hell) - those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification, and have in their minds no favour from anyone for which a reward is expected in return; but only the desire to seek for the Countenance of their Lord Most High; and soon will they attain (complete) satisfaction." (92:17-21)

These verses, as reports have it, were revealed in connection with Hadrat Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him). In the initial period of Islamic history, converts to Islam in general and Muslim slaves in particular, were severely persecuted in Mecca. Hadrat Abu Bakr was in the habit of purchasing the persecuted Muslim slaves and setting them free. Hadrat Bilal was one of those slaves. Some said dismissively that by purchasing Hadrat Bilal's freedom, Hadrat Abu Bakr might be just reciprocating some old favour received from him. In these verses, there is a contradiction of that baseless opinion and there is also an appreciation of Hadrat Abu Bakr's selfless dedication to a lofty cause. (Tafseer-e- Baghavi, and Khazin, 6/441,442)

The money thus spent by Hadrat Abu Bakr may be treated as a service in the cause of Islam; it may not be inaccurate if it is looked upon as a service to humanity. Still this service was granted a certificate of God's pleasure when it was rendered with the sole and stirring motive of pleasing God and there was nothing else to

alloy this motive.

Allama Ibne Katheer asserts that the attributes enumerated in these verses had their apotheosis in the person of Hadrat Abu Bakr and he had the privilege of surpassing others in this arena. Nevertheless, the phraseology of the verses is not person-specific and is community- inclusive. (Tafseer Ibne Katheer, 4/521) In other words, the phraseology applies to any member of the community who embodies these attributes.

Compensation and reward for spending with an unalloyed motive

The compensation and reward, reserved for spending with the noble and pure motive of securing Allah's pleasure and approval, are described in the following verse.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَ
تَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَاتَتْ
أَكْلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝ (البقرة: ٢٦٥)

"And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile; heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture suffices it. Allah sees well whatever you do." (2:265)

Two motives are mentioned in this verse- seeking to please Allah and seeking to strengthen their souls. Several interpretations are given in connection with the second motive. One, the psyche is so focused on spending as to

internalize it. Two, the purity of motive is fully sustained and kept unimpaired by any detracting factor and not allowed to flag. Three, their belief in the life hereafter and in the punishment and reward therein is so full of certitude that to ward off punishment and to secure rewards they freely part with their substance. (Vide Razi, Tafseer-e-Kabeer, vol.4, section7, p.49)

There may arise a need to spend promptly and publicly in order to set an example for others to emulate and they may come forward to participate in this noble enterprise. Spending can be done secretly and privately too and its advantage is that the self-respect of the recipient is not compromised and he is not put to embarrassment. The propriety of each way of spending is determined by the situation and the circumstances. The one condition that both ways of spending will have to fulfil is to keep the motive purely sincere. The Qur'an says,

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا
الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (البقرة: ٢٧١)

"If you disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well, but if you conceal them, and make them reach those (really) in need, that is best for you: it will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil. And Allah is well-acquainted with what you do." (2:271)

The possibility of making a show of a charitable act is radically reduced if it is done secretly and so the secret of spending is a preferred way. As long as the religious and communal discretion does not require the act of spending publicly, the safer method is to spend in secret.

The Traditions extol the secret method of spending. Hadrat Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

سبعة يظلهم الله تعالى في ظله يوم لا ظل الا ظله

Allah will keep seven types of people under His cover on the Day when there will be no other cover.

Among these fortunate people, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said:

رجل تصدق بصدقة فاخفاها حتى لا تعلم شماله

ما تنفق يمينه

There would be a man who gave alms in such a concealed manner that his left hand did not have an inkling of what the right hand had given. (Bukhari and Muslim, Kitabuz Zakat, sections on sadaqa)

Camera-crazy showcasing of virtuous deeds nullifies their rewards

Showpiece charity deals a fatal blow to the sincerity of commitment. Where one exists, the other cannot survive. On the Day of Judgment, virtuous deeds performed in all sincerity will bear fruit whereas camera-conscious performance of good deeds will bear no fruit. Purity of intention will attract Allah's infinite bounties whereas its antithesis will invite His wrath. That is why, the Qur'an and the Hadith lay great emphasis on the aspect of sincerity and give a stern warning to the Muslims to keep away from the gaudy display of one's religiosity because this will deprive good deeds of their fruit and reward. The Qur'an elucidates this point in this way:

كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
 الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ
 فَتَرَكَهٗ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللّٰهُ لَا
 يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (البقرة: ٢٦٤)

"Likewise those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. They are in parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil; on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (just) as a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned. And Allah guides not those who reject faith." (2:264)

In this verse, charity on show and lack of faith in Allah and the Last Day are kept cheek by jowl. The fact of the matter is that the sincerity of commitment blossoms in a heart awash with the flowering season of faith. It is difficult, nay impossible, for any act to remain unstained by an urge to steal the show without an abiding faith in Allah and the Last Day.

Service wedded to reputation

Reputation brings to those who hanker after the world what they strive for. Man secures the treasures of the world from the 'elitist' people at the helm of affairs. Social service is the most prestigious way to bag honours and recognition. To earn a reputation for being a promoter of human welfare and a servant of humanity is to earn an abundance of goodwill and trust. A worldly wise person can capitalize on it, wheedle his way to honour, prestige, power, and position, amass wealth and riches, and secure every kind of material benefit. He

serves mankind not because he is altruistic but because he proposes to feather his nest by making people indebted and grateful to him. When such a prospect is conspicuously absent, his enthusiasm for social service wilts and withers away.

The fate of service wedded to reputation

Any good act performed with an eye on name and fame invites God's punishment, and infuriates Him. While narrating the details of God's punishment, Hadrat Abu Huraira would have frequent blackouts and Hadrat Muawiyah would shed copious tears.

Hadrat Abu Huraira would report that the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said that on the Day of Judgment when Allah would descend to judge the people, He would take up the cases of three people on a priority basis. One of them would be a martyr. On his appearance, God would remind him how He had blessed him with strength, skill, and energy in this world. The martyr would agree that it was so and then he would be asked how he had expressed his gratitude for that favour and how he had pressed his strength into service. In reply, he would say that he had participated in Jihad, pressed his strength into God's service, and fought against God's foes to the last drop of his blood. God would tell the martyr that he was telling a lie as he had participated in Jihad to earn reputation as a man of courage. His intention was fulfilled and he had earned widespread reputation in this world as a man of courage. God would order the angels to drag him to hell with his face rubbing against the earth. The martyr would be thrown into hell.

The second person would be a scholar, well-versed in the skill of reciting the Qur'an. Allah would ask him if He had not endowed him with the erudition of the Scripture. The scholar would agree that it was so. Then he would be asked how he showed his gratitude for the blessing. In reply, he would say that he had disseminated the knowledge granted to him; he had read the Scripture, memorized it, and continued to recite it day and night. The reply would be rejected as a lie, and he would be told that the activities he listed were done merely to secure name and fame as a scholar and a well-versed reader of the Qur'an. What he had wanted to achieve, he had achieved in this world; he became famous as a scholar and his compensation was paid to him. God would ask the angels to drag him to hell in a painful way. The order would be carried out.

The third person would be a person blessed with opulence. He would be produced before God, who would ask him if he was not blessed with riches. In reply, he would agree that it was so. He would be asked again how he thanked God for the blessing. In reply, he would say that he had taken care of his relatives, and spent money on projects of social welfare, and in the way that God Himself had approved of. The reply would be rejected as a lie because he had sought to be recognized as a philanthropist nonpareil and that recognition was given to him during his sojourn in this world and so he would be thrown into hell too. (This Tradition is a little brief in Muslim, Kitabul amarat. It is more detailed in Tirmithi in the chapters on Zuhd. Nasai, Kitabul Jihad may be looked up.)

The affairs on which these men guilty of 'Riya' would

be taken to task have a bearing on some religious duties. It will be but proper if these duties are looked upon as aspects of social service. Humanity is definitely served by spreading literacy and spending money on welfare measures. The aims of Jihad are the establishment of religion (Dharma samsthapanarthaya- The Gita, 4:8. Translator) and the elimination of injustice and torture (ibid.); in a wider connotation, this is a part of social service too. These supreme duties are rendered void and fruitless if they are discharged for ostentation. What is more? Man may become the target of divine wrath.

Unpretentious service fetches unlimited reward

'Ikhlas' is that attitude of mind which is devoid of a desire to obtain a worldly gain or a substantial reward from other members of his own species. A man endowed with 'Ikhlas' sets his heart on pleasing Allah and on nothing else besides. He does not look forward to his adulation or the singing of panegyrics in his honour when he resorts to philanthropy or sympathy or solidarity with the grief-stricken. He does not put his angst to commercial use. His attitude is that it is his duty to be sympathetic. Overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude, he bends his head; he realizes that God has given him the rare privilege of serving His creatures. A vivid portrayal of the emotions of these self-abnegating people is enshrined in these verses:

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ۖ إِنَّمَا
 نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِرِجَالِهِ اللَّهُ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا ۚ إِنَّا
 نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا ۖ
 (الذھر: ۸-۱۰)

"And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive- (saying), 'We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.'

"We fear a Day of distressful wrath from the side of our Lord." (76:8- 10)

There is a mention of the rewards that will be heaped upon these single-minded and sincere devotees of God in the verses which follow the above passage. It is only 'Ikhlas' which generates this sublimity of character and this humility which accompanies dedicated service. No other stimulant generates this kind of power and dynamism.

Another profound statement about these pious and God-fearing people is as follows:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ
عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝ (آل عمران: ١٣٤)

"Those who spend (freely) whether in prosperity, or in adversity, who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men- for Allah loves those who do good." (3:134)

Attention is drawn here towards two distinguishing features of the God-fearing people. One, all-weather philanthropy of theirs continues unaffected by personal vicissitudes. Two, forgiveness and forbearance characterize their inter-personal relationships. These two features seem to be hand in glove. The hand that gives is superior to the hand that receives and so it is but natural if a sense of superiority seizes the philanthropist and he tends to look down upon at least those who are under a heavy burden of indebtedness to him. If there is a semblance of impertinence and offensive behaviour on

their part, it is beyond him to brook it. It requires sterling qualities of head and heart to overlook their lapses and to persist in ameliorating their condition. The words of the Qur'an mirror the fact that these God-fearing people renounce their egoism and embrace humility in spite of their unrestricted philanthropy. They do not seek to target anyone with contempt and blame; they do not seek ways and means to cut anyone to the heart. Instead, they pardon the culprits. They do not withhold help from anyone on the ground of unacceptable behaviour. The continuity of help remains unhampered by the offences of the beneficiaries. Philanthropists of that ilk obtain God's love.

Upbraiding after giving brings the result to nought

Another aspect of the conduct of such men of godliness is that after obliging the people in necessitous circumstances, they do not keep reminding them of their obligation. The gesture of reminding off and on bespeaks meanness of temperament. Allah does not allow a man of faith to get stained with it; instead, He blesses him with a transcendental temperament. The Qur'an declares

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا
مِنَّا وَلَا أَذًى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ○ (البقرة: ٢٦٢)

"Those who spend their substance in the cause of Allah, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury- for them their reward is with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." (2:262)

When an ungodly man shows some favour, he expects that the recipient should acknowledge it, should be grateful to him, should pray for further increase in his prosperity, should serve him, should be reverential towards him, should build up a public image of him as a philanthropist of the first water, should remain at his beck and call, should read his mind from his facial expression and act accordingly, and should carry out his orders subserviently. If this expectation is belied, then the ungodly man resolves to humiliate him by repeatedly reminding him of his grinding poverty and how favours were shown to him. No opportunity to snub and taunt him is spared. A well-bred person finds the pain thus inflicted on his mind and soul more difficult to bear than the physical pain.

According to the Qur'an, instead of upbraiding after giving and making the help-seeker a laughing-stock, it is better to excuse oneself from giving and send him away after uttering a few words of sympathy. The self-respect of the poor person will remain intact and he will go away with the impression that he had knocked at the door of a man of sympathy and politeness.

قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَّدَقَةٍ تُتْبَعُهَا أذى
وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ۝ (البقرة: ٢٦٣)

"Kind words and covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants and He is most forbearing." (2:263)

After doing one a good turn, it is not advisable to ruin it by holding it up before one. The Qur'an urges,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى
(البقرة: ٢٦٣)

"O ye who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury." (2:264)

In the Traditions, a very strict warning is given about the consequences of harping on one's favours to others. In a report by Hadrat Abu Tharr, the Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be with him) said,

ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا يَكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْيَمِّ. الْمَنَّانُ الَّذِي لَا يُعْطَى شَيْئًا إِلَّا
مَنْهُ وَالْمُنْفِقُ سَلَعَتُهُ بِالْحَلْفِ الْفَاجِرِ وَالْمَسْبِلُ أَزَارُهُ

"There are three kinds of people who Allah would neither talk to nor look at and they would endure severe punishment on the Day of Judgment. One of them will be a person who makes a harangue to the recipient of his favours. The second one will be a trader who boosts his sales by means of false oaths. The third one is a person who, out of sheer pride, wears his lower garment (pajamas) so long as to touch the ground." (Muslim, Kitabul Iman)

A cross-grained person seeks to extract an acknowledgment of his supremacy by reminding the beneficiary of the bounties he has granted to him and then by putting him in the wrong. This is nothing but perversity. Greatness falls to the lot of those individuals who serve humanity without an axe to grind. They are the cynosure of humanity and they are the dearly loved ones of God.

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Given below is a list of the author's books (Urdu) mentioned in this book.

39. Non-Muslims-Their Rights And How To Relate With Them.

40. Islam: A Vigilant Sentinel of Human Rights.
41. Islamic Precepts on Health and Illness. (All three books. pub. by Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, New Delhi, 25).

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